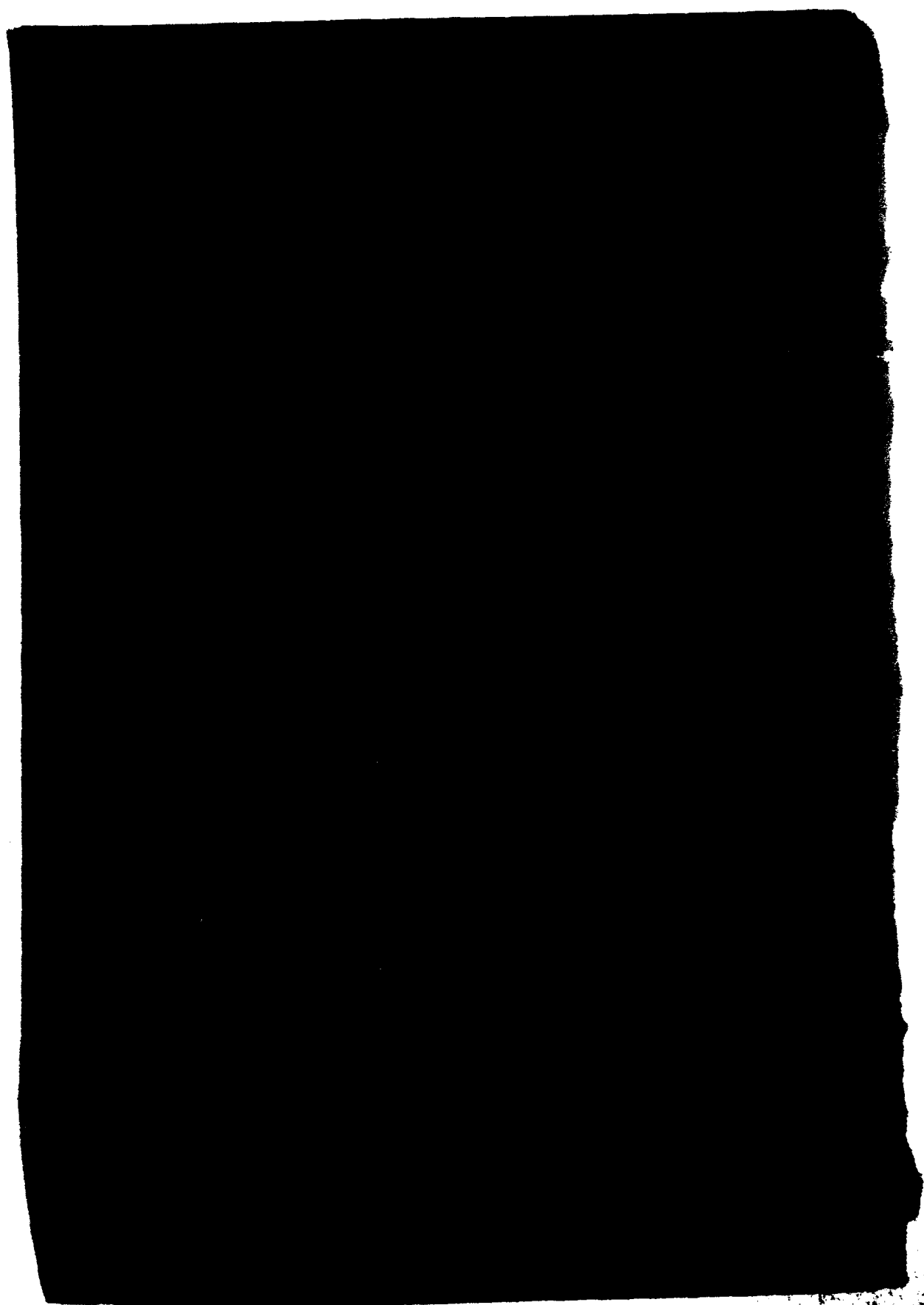


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→ The Soviets have conducted submarine operations in Swedish waters continuously since World War II. Although the evidence of these violations of Sweden's territorial waters is incomplete, Swedish authorities indicate that ~~foreign~~ submarine operations were carried out infrequently and at irregular intervals during the 1960s and into the late 1970s. The scope and character of Soviet operations in Sweden changed in or around 1980, however, becoming much more frequent, penetrating the heart of Sweden's coastal defense zones, and involving the use of multiple submarines, mini-submarines, and combat swimmers operating in a coordinated manner. This report examines the strange case of Soviet submarine operations in Swedish waters since 1980. It discusses the nature of these operations as well as related activities being carried out on Swedish soil, the political and strategic context within which these operations have evolved, the objectives that apparently underlie these activities, and the continuity in Soviet civil-military decisionmaking on the submarine question. ←

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Stranger than Fiction

Soviet Submarine Operations in Swedish Waters

Gordon H. McCormick

January 1990

A Project AIR FORCE report
prepared for the
United States Air Force

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PREFACE

This report examines the strange case of Soviet submarine operations in Swedish waters since 1980. It discusses the nature of these operations as well as related activities being carried out on Swedish soil; the political and strategic context within which these operations have evolved; the objectives that apparently underlie these activities; and the continuity in Soviet civil-military decisionmaking on the submarine question.

This study was carried out as part of the project Soviet Civil-Military Relations: The Possibilities for Policy Change, under the National Security Strategies Program of Project AIR FORCE. Earlier studies in this project are:

Jeremy R. Azrael, *The Soviet Civilian Leadership and the Military High Command, 1976-1986*, R-3521-AF, June 1987.

Abraham S. Becker, *Ogarkov's Complaint and Gorbachev's Dilemma: The Soviet Defense Budget and Party-Military Conflict*, R-3541-AF, December 1987.

Francis Fukuyama, *Soviet Civil-Military Relations and the Third World*, R-3504-AF, April 1987.

Harry Gelman, *The Soviet Military Leadership and the Question of Soviet External Retreats*, R-3664-AF, November 1988.

Edward L. Warner and Josephine Bonan, *Key Personnel and Organizations of the Soviet Military High Command*, N-2567-AF, April 1987.

This study will be of interest to individuals and organizations concerned with evolving Soviet strategy toward Europe and NATO planning for the high north.

SUMMARY

The Soviets have conducted submarine operations in Swedish waters continuously since World War II. Although the evidence of these violations of Sweden's territorial waters is incomplete, Swedish authorities indicate that "foreign" submarine operations were carried out at irregular intervals between the 1960s and the late 1970s. Soviet incursions were infrequent, of limited duration, and very seldom involved more than one submarine at a time. Most occurred in Sweden's outer territorial waters. Few appear to have reached the inner waters of the archipelago. The incidence of Soviet operations has increased gradually over time, but there were never more than four probable intrusions registered in any single year until the early 1980s.

The scope and character of Soviet operations in Sweden changed in or around 1980. The most obvious to foreign observers was the rapid growth in the frequency of Soviet underwater intrusions. Since 1980, Swedish sources indicate that an average rate of between 17 and 36 foreign operations are being conducted per year, depending on the degree of probability that is assigned to each underwater contact. As Swedish authorities have been quick to point out, these are only the incidents they know about. There was also an evident shift in the character and apparent operational objective of these incursions. For the first time Soviet intruders began to penetrate into the heart of Sweden's coastal defense zones, including the harbors of the country's major naval bases. More often than not, these operations now involved the use of multiple submarines, mini-submarines, and combat swimmers operating in a coordinated manner, either against a common target or against multiple targets along the coast. The bold nature of these operations, the increasing detection capabilities of the Swedish Royal Navy, and a concerned press have brought Soviet operations to the forefront of public attention in Sweden.

Soviet submarine operations have proven to be a liability rather than a boon to known Soviet political objectives in Western Europe, an outcome that would hardly prove to be satisfactory if the objectives underlying the submarine campaign were in fact political in nature. The Soviet civil-military leadership has had eight years to monitor and assess Swedish reactions to the submarine crisis, which have been negative, undermined Soviet-Swedish relations, further sensitized Swedish authorities to the Soviet military threat, exacerbated public fears of Soviet intentions, contributed to a major

improvement in the U.S. approval rating, stimulated a broad based debate over Swedish security policy, and led to the first real increase in the country's defense budget since 1972. Although the reaction to the Soviet submarine campaign throughout the rest of Western Europe has certainly been less dramatic, it has not been favorable. Soviet operations in Sweden, coupled with the frequent violation of Norwegian waters as well, have undermined Soviet efforts to build a new, more cooperative, peace loving profile in the European mind. At the very least, they have been a reminder of the "old" Soviet Union and the potentially aggressive character of Soviet policy. At this writing, however, the political effects of Soviet behavior have been diluted by two considerations: Sweden's refusal to dramatize its grievances against Moscow on the international stage, and the preoccupation of many in the West with the improving atmosphere of East-West relations. While the submarine campaign has worked to the Soviet's political disadvantage, overall political trends in the West suggest that the political and diplomatic costs of continuing are still deemed to be acceptable.

More serious than the actual costs incurred to continue to send submarines into Swedish waters is the fact that these operations also entail several real political risks. One of these days, the Swedish government might decide to authorize whatever measures are necessary to destroy a Soviet intruder; despite Stockholm's claims to the contrary it has been reluctant to make such a decision. Alternatively, Swedish naval units could inadvertently destroy or damage an intruder in their efforts to force it out of Swedish waters; a frustrated local commander could decide to take matters into his own hands and move against a localized Soviet submarine without authorization; or, as in 1981, Moscow could have one of its operations exposed deep inside Swedish territorial waters through carelessness, equipment failure, or simple bad luck. Should the Swedes, by accident or design, ever sink or capture a Soviet submarine, the political fallout would be felt throughout Western Europe. In contrast to "Whiskey on the Rocks," which took place in the early years of the Soviet submarine campaign, such an incident would be interpreted against the backdrop of nine years of violations, eight years of Soviet denials, and Moscow's most recent program to convince all who will listen that there is "new thinking" at the top.

The submarine campaign and related Soviet operations ashore can be satisfactorily interpreted only within the context of Soviet military interests and likely wartime goals in Scandinavia and the Baltic area. These interests and objectives stem from the region's location between the Arctic and Western "theaters of

strategic military action" (TVD), the growing importance of northern-based assets in Soviet strategic nuclear planning, and Soviet interest over the past decade in establishing a conventional warfighting option in Western Europe. Soviet assessments of the military challenges they face in the north and the consequent role of peacetime operations for wartime readiness appear to be directly tied to these and related considerations.

One recent assessment of Soviet planning toward the high north noted that there are no moral reasons that would impel the Russians to respect Swedish neutrality, only practical ones. With this in mind, it is easy to imagine that Sweden would be targeted in a future war in Europe and certain that it has been brought into contingent Soviet war plans. First, Sweden lies on the road to Norway. Any future Soviet offensive against Norway, and to a lesser degree Denmark, would be facilitated greatly by the use of Swedish territory and airspace. Sweden's importance as an avenue to Norway is directly related to the speed with which the Soviets believe they must achieve their northern objectives. Even the minimum objectives of securing the north cape and suppressing NATO air operations in northern and southern Norway would be seriously complicated by the need to circumvent Swedish airspace.

Soviet incentives to move against Sweden at the outset of a future European conflict appear to be reinforced by an abiding suspicion of the country's neutrality and claims to nonalignment. The question in the Soviet mind is, "How neutral is a neutral Sweden?" It has been argued that the Soviets would be content to see Sweden sit out the next war as a nonaligned bystander, defending its neutrality against all who would attempt to use Swedish airspace or territory for military advantage. Although the Soviets, in these circumstances, would not be able to exploit Sweden's central location, neither would the West, which would be similarly hindered from crossing Swedish airspace to attack Soviet territory. Moscow may be willing to acknowledge (if not accommodate) Swedish neutrality in peacetime, but it could never permit critical wartime objectives to turn on Swedish forbearance. Although Sweden's stated policy is one of nonalignment, Swedish sympathies and security interests lie with the West. Though not the public view of the Swedish government, this is certainly the perspective of the Soviet planner, who sees the Swedes differently than they see themselves and who is tasked with the job of anticipating the worst.

Soviet submarine incursions and related operations ashore can be fully interpreted only within the context of such a scenario. Apart from the fact that these operations have proved to be

a political liability, their character and apparent objectives all point to a military motive. Based on an evaluation of Soviet requirements, the strengths and weaknesses of the Swedish defense system, and the nature of ongoing Soviet operations, the problem is quite different from what may have faced the Swedes at the end of World War II. The threat facing Sweden throughout that war was from a possible conventional attack, first by the Germans and later by the Soviet Union. The threat today appears to be increasingly unconventional. It is an "insider threat," designed to attack Sweden's defense posture from within. Although such an offensive would probably be the opening gambit of a larger military and political campaign against Sweden, its success or failure, and by implication the success of the larger Soviet Nordic campaign, could turn on the outcome of these initial operations. The objective would be the crippling of Sweden's ability to effectively respond to a Soviet external challenge, opening the way for an accommodation that would permit Soviet forces to transit Swedish territory or airspace as part of a general campaign against Norway.

Whether, how, and when the Soviets would attack Sweden in a future war in Europe, of course, is impossible to predict. However, the Soviets have obviously brought Sweden into their wartime contingency plans, the result both of a longstanding suspicion of Swedish declarations of neutrality and the growing importance of the Nordic peninsula in Soviet military planning. Soviet clandestine operations in Sweden itself and off the Swedish coast are an indication of Soviet interests in this area. The nature of these operations points to a general interest in the country's mobilization system and a specific interest in the Swedish Air Force and Navy. Soviet intelligence efforts have not been random. They have been specifically targeted to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of Sweden's warning and alert system, its mobilization system, and the nature of the opposition that might be expected in the event of war. On the basis of this, a great deal of attention appears to have been given to identifying a list of wartime military and political targets. Soviet efforts in these areas are revealed by their operations. What they will do with this information is a matter of debate. Based on an evaluation of Soviet military interests in the north, the nature of the Swedish defense system, and the timing constraints that are likely to face Soviet planners on the eve of war, however, it is likely that Moscow would probably consider the option of striking Sweden at the outset of a future European conflict. The present risks of doing so are low, and the potential military payoffs must be judged to be high.

The submarine crisis has, from the beginning, been wrapped up in interpretations of the larger issue of Soviet civil-military relations. Early Swedish views on the crisis were based on the assumption that

the Soviet civil leadership could not possibly be aware of the nature and extent of the navy's operations off Sweden's coast. Some observers went so far as to argue that the navy was "out of control." If it was not flagrantly violating its marching orders, it was certainly overstepping the bounds of its authority. To put an end to the submarine incursions, one had only to make the Soviet civil leadership aware of what was going on. Those responsible would be disciplined and the incidents would come to a halt. On the basis of this assumption, Sweden began to publicize the fact that "alien intruders" were known to be penetrating Swedish waters. Sweden later sought to take its case directly to the Soviet leadership, through both diplomatic and informal channels.

Soviet operations not only continued but evidently increased during the early 1980s. Even the most committed were forced to question the assumption that these operations resulted from either the diminution of civilian authority over the Soviet military establishment or a disparity in civil-military interests. As Soviet submarines continued to operate regularly in Swedish waters, it became apparent that the Soviet civilian leadership was not only fully cognizant of these operations, but that it also supported the planning requirements they are designed to serve. This has been increasingly apparent since Gorbachev's ascendancy in March 1985. Soviet operations in Sweden continued in strength through the first quarter of 1989, or Gorbachev's first four years in office, the date of the last available information. Coupled with Gorbachev's political agenda in Europe, the changes he has instituted within the military command structure, and his early moves to take personal control of the Soviet foreign policy establishment, these operations have helped put Soviet decisionmaking into focus. The Soviet political platform in Europe is directly at odds with the goals and potential consequences of the submarine campaign. Gorbachev appears to have good reason to see that these operations are brought to a rapid halt. He is in a position to end them at once if there were a net advantage in doing so. That this has not occurred suggests that he, like his predecessors, either supports the underlying objectives of the campaign or will not curtail Soviet incursions until he can demonstrate that they are causing far greater difficulties for the Soviet Union in the West than has been the case thus far.

The directed nature of Soviet behavior, the time frame over which these operations have been carried out, and the risks that have been incurred to conduct these activities in the face of a contrary political policy toward Europe and the West all suggest civilian-military agreement on the strategic importance

of the Scandinavian peninsula and role it could play in a future conflict. This agreement is likely to go beyond the fundamentals to encompass the premises and operational concepts that provide the groundwork for Soviet European military planning. There may be differences in the importance each group assigns to the political and military consequences of these operations, but there is little evidence of dispute over the basic agenda. If there were, these operations would not have continued in their present form for as long as they have. The Soviet civil leadership is clearly willing to pay a political price to see these activities carried out. This is all the more compelling when one considers that this price is defined in terms of current costs and risks, which are measured against the prospect of some future gain.

Nevertheless, the Soviet political-military consensus to continue these operations could begin to fracture in the foreseeable future. Gorbachev seems to be more sensitive to the costs and risks associated with these operations than were his predecessors. He has a political agenda. Reshaping the Soviet Union's image in the West and improving the Soviet relationship with Western Europe have lately assumed a higher importance than at any previous period since World War II. Gorbachev's opening to the West promises to result in additional gains over the next few years, in an expanded arms control regime, in possible trade and other economic concessions, in a more relaxed political atmosphere, and in a reduced U.S. profile in Europe. The present Soviet leadership, one can assume, will not place the advantages of this developing situation at risk lightly. To the degree that the submarine campaign is believed to jeopardize these goals, the wisdom of continuing is likely to be reconsidered. The fact that this has not yet occurred only indicates that the perceived risks to these objectives do not yet outweigh the advantages of carrying on.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Although the evidence of Soviet submarine operations in Swedish waters is incomplete, records indicate that foreign submarine operations were carried out at irregular intervals between the early 1960s and the late 1970s (see Table 1). These operations were infrequent, of limited duration, and seldom involved more than one submarine at a time. Most were restricted to Swedish outer waters. Very few appear to have been carried out in the inner waters of the archipelago.¹ On the average, between 1962 and 1979, Sweden experienced between one and two confirmed or probable submarine violations of its territorial waters a year. According to most Swedish observers, these operations, though gradually more provocative during the mid to late 1970s, differ in kind from the operational pattern observed since approximately 1980.

The scope and character of Soviet operations in Sweden appear to have changed in or around 1980. These operations are not restricted to the violation of Swedish waters, but include a host of other actions on Swedish territory itself. When correlated with the changing pattern of Soviet submarine violations, these suggest an integrated campaign of Soviet covert operations against Sweden's defense establishment. The most obvious and dramatic element of this effort continues to be Soviet submarine operations. The bold nature of these actions, the increasing detection capabilities of the Swedish Royal Navy, and a vigilant public have brought the actions of Soviet submarines to the forefront of international attention. Submarines, once detected, can be counted, chased, and depth charged. The fact that the Royal Navy has not yet succeeded in either destroying a submarine or forcing one to surface has not diminished the press coverage given to the hunt itself. Information on recent Soviet activities in Swedish coastal waters, consequently, is fairly good.

The same cannot be said unfortunately of Soviet and Soviet-bloc operations on Swedish territory. Most of these have been carried out below the public horizon. They involve the use of covert operatives, many if not most of whom may be in Sweden under legal cover. While almost certainly related to the submarine crisis, for obvious reasons Swedish authorities have been much less successful in their efforts to

¹Sweden defines its inner waters to be the waters of the internal archipelago, encompassing the area from Sweden's local coastline to the region's outer rocks, skerries, or islands. The country's internal waters are distinguished from its outer territorial waters, which extend 12 nautical miles out to sea from the outer edge of the archipelago.

uncover and monitor these activities. Much of what is known has been discovered through intelligence means and has not been made available to the general public. What evidence is publicly available, however, provides a rough portrait of the direction and character of Soviet covert military activities on Swedish soil. The concern shown over these operations within Swedish military circles suggests that Soviet actions on Swedish soil may be even broader than is commonly assumed.

The data on Soviet operations used in this study can be divided into information gathered from public sources, Swedish government publications, press reports, and secondary analysis; and data gathered in the course of extensive interviews conducted in Sweden and with Swedish officials in the United States. Discussions were held with officials of the Swedish Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, members of the Royal Armed Forces and the Swedish National Defense Research Institute, serving members of the Social Democratic and Moderate Parties, and observers in the Swedish press. These discussions proved to be very fruitful, both in identifying incidents not widely publicized in the open literature and as a means of confirming or discrediting many of the rumors and stories that have circulated since these operations first began to receive serious public attention in 1981. The interviews were also an important source of information on Swedish defense policy and the ways Swedish planners have sought to adapt to what is widely viewed as a new and possibly growing threat to Sweden's policy of armed neutrality.

The story underlying these incidents is what has motivated them and what they may mean for Soviet military decisionmaking toward Sweden. Are these operations politically motivated? Are they being conducted to satisfy certain military ends? Are these goals in conflict? If the motivation is an operational one, are these incidents being conducted for training purposes, as part of general Soviet Baltic operations, or to support specific wartime contingency plans against Sweden? What, if anything, can these operations tell us about Soviet planning priorities and the unity of Soviet civil-military decisionmaking? Here again, the available evidence is largely circumstantial. In many cases, the more specific our answers are to these questions the less certain are our conclusions. Certain conclusions do emerge that are based on an examination of the character of these operations, Soviet military interests in the Nordic area, and the costs and benefits that have accrued to the Soviets in conducting these operations over the past eight years.

II. INCIDENTS AND TRENDS

The Swedish "submarine crisis," as it is often referred to in Sweden, has passed through several phases over the past nine years. Phase one began with the change in the scope and number of annual violations of Swedish territorial waters noted in late 1979 and 1980 leading up to the 1981 grounding of a Soviet submarine at Karlskrona. This period marks the beginning of the official concern, predominantly within the armed forces, that a change had taken place in Soviet military planning against Sweden. Phase two, which marks the beginning of a serious internal debate over the possible implications of the submarine crisis for Swedish security, corresponds roughly to the period from the time of the Karlskrona incident through the discovery of a major Soviet operation in the waters of Harsfjarden and the Stockholm archipelago to the publication of the Submarine Defense Commission Report in April 1983.¹ Many official observers by this time were convinced that the Soviet Union was carrying out these operations for military purposes, and they posed a growing threat to Swedish sovereignty. The third phase, which continues into the present time, has been marked by a clear revision in Swedish threat perceptions, continuing Soviet violations, and recurring debate over what new steps might be taken to stop these incursions while preserving a national commitment to neutrality and nonalignment.

Royal Navy detection of foreign submarines, some deep in Sweden's internal waters, gradually increased throughout 1980 and 1981. The most notable of these was the series of violations detected off the island of Uto in the southern Stockholm archipelago during the summer of 1980.² Analyses of the operation revealed that at least two submarines had penetrated the Uto area. The incident is cited as the first clear case in which a hostile submarine responded to Navy efforts to expel it from Swedish waters by taking evasive action and penetrating deeper into the archipelago. It was not to be the last. Other major violations during this period were noted in the waters off the Blekinge archipelago, the approaches to Stockholm, the coast of Norland, outside Oxelosund, the Hano Bight, and again off Uto. In all, 19 probable

¹Ministry of Defense, 1983.

²The incident occurred on September 18 and lasted until the end of the month. The islands of Uto and Huvudakar, around which the incident took place, are located in the southern Stockholm archipelago in the vicinity of the Musko naval complex. For an overview of this incident see Leitenberg, pp. 34, 36.

or possible submarine incursions were reported between late 1979 and mid-1981, many believed to involve multiple submarines. Although foreign submarines were known to have visited Swedish waters periodically since the early 1930s, these operations were widely perceived within informed circles to be a dramatic escalation over the established pattern of underwater violations. The new "wave" of submarine intrusions was being conducted with a boldness, frequency, and degree of coordination never witnessed in earlier years.³ Table 1 indicates the annual violations from 1962 through 1988.

The growing incidence of underwater intrusions alarmed most military observers, but at first the general population remained skeptical and suspicious of Navy claims. Most Swedes dismissed these early submarine sightings as being fanciful or as a calculated attempt by the Navy to gain a greater share of a shrinking defense budget. The submarines were called "budget boats" by the press. Even many of those inclined to side with the Royal Swedish Navy found it difficult to believe that these operations were taking place with the regularity and aggressiveness indicated by Royal Navy spokesmen. The Navy was unable to back up its statements with substantiating evidence. This changed with the now well-known "Whiskey on the Rocks" incident in late 1981. Over the course of the ten-day episode, Swedish attitudes on the submarine question began what in retrospect has been a long process of readjustment. Although the U-137 incident did not forge a consensus on the implications of these operations for Swedish security, it provided the first clear indication that Soviet submarines regularly carrying out clandestine operations throughout the Swedish archipelago. This incident also marked the beginning of a protracted debate over the changing character of Soviet military interests in the Nordic area and the possible place Sweden might now hold in Soviet war plans for the Baltic and high north. See Fig. 1 for the areas in which Soviet submarines were operating.

WHISKEY ON THE ROCKS

On the morning of October 28, 1981, the residents of Torumskan in the area of the Swedish naval complex at Karlskrona awoke to find that a Soviet Whiskey (W)-class boat had grounded early the previous evening in the waters of Gasofjorden and had spent the night attempting to work itself off the shoals. The approaches to Gasofjorden are

³A summary of the early years of the submarine campaign is provided in *The Submarine Threat*, pp. 20-29. For a discussion of Soviet operations during and before World War II, see Suggs, 1986, pp. 100-106.

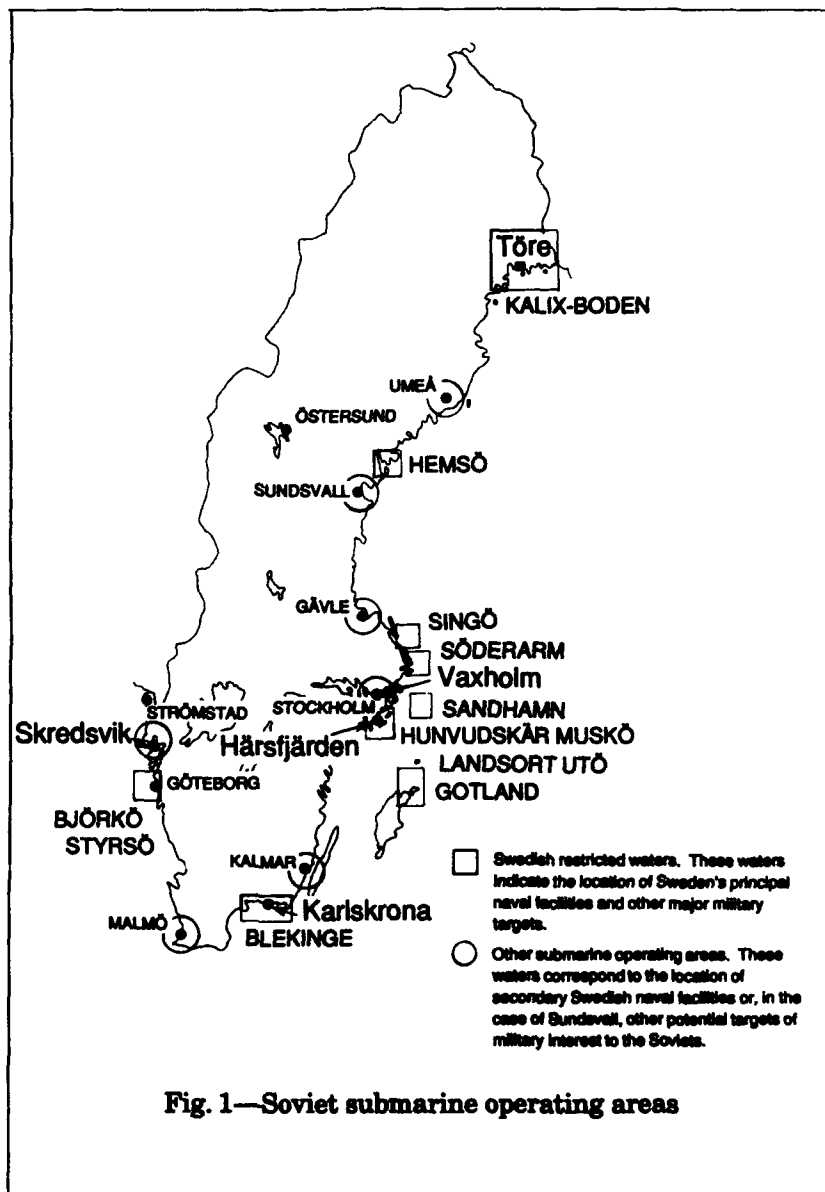
Table 1
ANNUAL SUBMARINE VIOLATIONS 1962-1988

Year	Violations ^a	Possible Violations	Total
1962	1	0	1
1963	3	0	3
1964	0	2	2
1965	0	0	0
1966	4	0	4
1967	0	8	8
1968	1	2	3
1969	4	5	9
1970	0	7	7
1971	1	2	3
1972	2	2	4
1973	0	2	2
1974	3	4	7
1975	3	6	9
1976	1	6	7
1977	2	6	8
1978	0	2	2
1979	1	4	5
1980	5	4	9
1981	4	6	10
1982	18	22	40
1983	25	38	63
1984	20	40	60
1985	15	19	34
1986	18	21	39
1987	30+ ^b	NA	30+
1988	30+	NA	30+
Total	191	208	399

SOURCES: Ministry of Defense, 1983; *Orientering*, quarterly and summary annual reports, Forsvarsstabens Informationsavdelning, Stockholm, 1964-1987; Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) and Joint Publication Research Service (JPRS), the *Western Europe Report* series, 1963-1988; author sources in Sweden.

^aIncludes "certain" and "probable" violations. These categories are Swedish judgments. The criteria used to determine how an "incident" will be categorized have changed (grown more restrictive) over time.

^bIncludes only second and third quarter violations.



extremely hazardous. The area is strewn with rocks, shallows, islands, and underwater pinnacles, making even surface navigation in broad daylight potentially dangerous. According to the skipper of U-137, Captain Second Rank A. M. Gushchin, the submarine's presence in Swedish waters was the result of a gross navigational error caused by faulty equipment. His own calculations, he insisted, placed him 20 miles off the Polish coast.⁴ This argument was dismissed by the Swedes, who pointed out that the Captain's success in penetrating as far as he did was a testament both to his skill as a navigator and the working order of his equipment. This was confirmed on November 3, when Swedish investigators boarded U-137 and examined its navigational instruments. A subsequent report on the incident also revealed that logbook entries on the submarine's course headings during the last 20 minutes of its voyage had been recently altered.⁵

The initial reaction within Sweden to the Soviet grounding was mixed. Many Swedes were outraged that a Soviet submarine would be operating within the restricted waters of one of the country's largest naval facilities; others found humor in the fact that Moscow had been caught in *flagrante delicto*. The mood within Sweden became more somber, however, when on November 5, Prime Minister Falldin announced in a press conference that U-137 was believed to be carrying nuclear weapons. During the several days the submarine lay grounded, its bow section was elevated above the water line, exposing its forward torpedo compartment. Radiation measurements conducted by scientists of the Swedish Defense Research Institute (FOA) determined that between one and ten kg of U-238 was located just inside the hull, presumably in one of several torpedo tubes. The presence of U-238, which is used as a jacket or tamper in nuclear warheads, led the inves-

⁴The official Soviet statement on the grounding claimed that the submarine "was on an ordinary training cruise in the Baltic" when "it strayed off course in poor visibility." Swedish intercepts of uncoded Soviet transmissions to and from the submarine, however, indicated that the U-boat's commander was given instructions to offer this explanation.

On several occasions in later years Soviet diplomats were reported to have told their Swedish counterparts that the real reason U-137 ran aground was because the entire crew was drunk. According to this version of events, the submarine was returning from a scheduled exercise in the southern Baltic and, per custom, the crew was treated to a party. Events were said to have gotten out of hand when the Captain First Rank who was overseeing Commander Gushin's performance kept plying the crew with strong drink. One thing was said to have led to another, and the submarine ended up deep within the Swedish archipelago. The navigator and other responsible officers on board the boat were said to have been so drunk that they no longer had control over the vessel. This was reported in *Arbeiderbladet* (Oslo), December 1963, WER, December 27, 1963.

⁵*Ellis*, 1966, p. 96; and *Dagens Nyheter*, June 24, 1964.

tigating team to conclude that the submarine was carrying an unknown number of nuclear weapons.⁶

Within days of the grounding the Swedes issued a sharp note of protest to the Soviet government, declaring that the presence of the Soviet submarine in Swedish waters was a "flagrant violation" of Sweden's territorial integrity. They stated that the explanation provided by the captain concerning a failure of navigation was without basis and that the "submarine intentionally violated Swedish territory for the purpose of carrying out illegal activities." The incident, the note went on, "was all the more remarkable and serious" because the submarine was believed to be carrying nuclear weapons into Swedish territory. The note stated that Swedish authorities had requested that Moscow clarify whether or not nuclear weapons were in fact present, without reply. Sweden concluded, therefore, that the Soviet government was "unable to deny the presence of nuclear weapons on board the submarine." The note ended by demanding that the Soviet Union prevent any repetition of this incident and adhere to the basic principles of international law.⁷

The Soviet reaction was arrogant and unrepentant. Swedish accusations, according to Moscow, were "groundless in both law and fact." The incident, the Soviets insisted, was due to an innocent navigational error and should be treated as such by Swedish authorities. To demand that such an incident not be repeated was analogous to denying the possibility of future accidents at sea, a point that in the Soviet view "was simply not compatible with common sense." The only official statement issued by the Soviets on the nuclear question sidestepped the issue and declared that U-137 carried, "as do all other naval vessels at sea, the necessary weapons and ammunition." Later Soviet press commentaries suggested that the radiation readings taken from the submarine were alternatively an "invention," the work of "NATO specialists," or due to radiation traces from the investigators'

⁶Leitenberg, 1982, pp. 17-28; Agrell, "Soviet Strategy and War Planning, 1987, pp. 80-84.

⁷Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1981, pp. 81-101. A Swedish Defense Staff report of the incident released on December 18 revealed that U-137 had been in the Karlskrona area for as long as three days before the grounding. It was also determined subsequently that U-137 was probably but one of several Soviet submarines operating together at the time the incident took place. On October 29, two days after U-137 ran aground, the Royal Navy made contact with a second submarine moving near the outer approaches of Karlskrona sound. In commenting on the probable motive of the incursion, Swedish spokesmen noted that the Navy had been conducting torpedo tests in Karlskrona sound during the period U-137 and its accompanying intruders were in the area. The apparent objective of the intrusion was to observe these trials. It was also noted that this was not the first time that Navy torpedo tests had been subject to surveillance by unwanted observers.

own wristwatches. Soviet officials claimed that the incident was the result of "Swedish forces that want to undermine the relations between the USSR and Sweden."⁸

The Soviet note stated that, according to international law, U-137 must be treated as sovereign Soviet territory. Moscow demanded that Swedish authorities permit them to refloat the submarine and return it immediately to Soviet hands. In an effort to enforce these demands, elements of the Soviet Baltic fleet were dispatched to the Karlskrona area, just outside the territorial limit. By the evening of October 28, only one day after the grounding, eight Soviet vessels were deployed off the Swedish coast, including two destroyers, a submarine salvage ship, and two electronic intelligence vessels. Within five days, this force was joined by a third destroyer, a frigate, two missile boats, and an oiler. Radio transmissions from the Soviet force, which were being monitored by the Swedes, indicated that the operation was being run by Vice Admiral A. Kalinin, First Deputy Commander of the Baltic Fleet.⁹

Swedish authorities ignored these actions and set forth the terms under which the submarine would be released: (1) The Royal Navy would remove the submarine from the rocks, (2) The salvage costs incurred in the operation would be borne by Moscow, (3) Moscow would be required to formally apologize for the intrusion, and (4) The submarine's commander would have to submit to questioning by Swedish authorities. Moscow reluctantly agreed to these terms on November 2. Swedish investigators went aboard the submarine the following day to inspect the submarine's command center and the log. The affair ended on November 6, ten days after the grounding, when the submarine was towed out to sea and proceeded on the surface.¹⁰

THE SUBMARINE DEFENSE COMMISSION

Soviet submarine operations appear to have increased dramatically by the third quarter of 1982. In line with the experiences of earlier years, few incidents were registered in the opening months of the new year. By June, however, Soviet operations were once again in full

⁸Prime Minister Thorbjorn Falldin, Press Conference Transcript, November 5, 1981, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; *Dagens Nyheter*, November 10 and December 23, 1981; *International Herald Tribune*, November 12, 1981; See also Leitenberg, 1982, pp. 18-20. A full translation of the Soviet reply was also reprinted in *Proceedings*, April 1982.

⁹*Svenska Dagbladet*, May 3, 1983; *Svenska Dagbladet*, June 25, 1984.

¹⁰Ironically, during the early 1960s Soviet submarines attached to the Baltic Fleet were used to carry out "goodwill" port calls in Sweden. The submarines used for this purpose were the U-100, U-134, and U-138, all sister ships of U-137. McGwire, 1976), pp. 387-418.

swing. On June 3, a confirmed sighting of two or more submarines was made in the area of Holmogadd, on the Gulf of Bothnia. This was followed the next day by a sighting and subsequent contact of one or more submarines off the coast of Sundsvall, and several days later by the first of two independent submarine contacts in the area of the Stockholm archipelago. A third probable contact was registered in the same area in July, followed by two certain sightings in August. In the first nine months of the year, eight certain or probable sightings of foreign submarines were made off the Swedish coast. Of the hundreds of reported sightings of alien submarines made during this period, almost 50 could be explained only by the actual presence of alien intruders.¹¹

As alarming as these incidents were to Swedish authorities, they were soon overshadowed by the confirmed sighting of multiple foreign submarines deep within the inner waters of Harsfjarden, in the immediate area of Sweden's largest naval base and ship repair center at Musko. The "Harsfjarden Incident," as it would come to be known, resulted in the largest and most publicized antisubmarine warfare (ASW) operation ever conducted by the Royal Navy. The size and duration of the submarine intrusion was also unprecedented. The submarine search, which began on October 1, did not end until November 1. A subsequent analysis of information gathered in the course of the operation indicated that alien submarines had in fact been operating in the Harsfjarden area several weeks earlier and may have returned to the area between mid- and late November once the initial search had ended. It also became clear early in the operation that more than one submarine was involved in the intrusion. Multiple contacts were registered within the first days of the ASW search using a variety of methods, including active and passive sonar, unspecified signals intelligence methods, and magnetic detection. Swedish efforts to force a submarine to the surface resulted in the first large scale use of depth charges, although the Navy was under orders not to destroy the intruders but to force them up or out of Swedish territorial waters. The hunt created an international sensation. The story of the search was front page news for weeks, not only in Sweden but throughout Western Europe, attracting hundreds of reporters, tourists, and curious local residents over the course of the month-long operation. In the end, of course, the Soviets managed to escape the Swedish ASW net

¹¹Ellis, 1986, p. 96; and Ministry of Defense, 1983, pp. 20-24.

and break out into open waters.¹² The event opened up a new chapter in Swedish efforts to stem the tide of underwater incursions.¹³

The dramatic and aggressive character of the Harsfjarden incident, coupled with the events of the previous summer, forced the newly elected Palme government to establish a parliamentary commission to investigate the features of the October operation and the general problem of foreign submarine incursions in Swedish waters. Its final report, a sanitized version of which was made public in April 1983, made several important observations. First, it was made clear that the incidence of submarine violations in Swedish waters had risen substantially over the previous three years. Before 1979, Sweden was believed to have experienced one or two certain and probable intrusions per year. Certain or probable detections, however, were reported to have risen from one to five between 1979 and 1980, and from four to 18 between 1981 and 1982. The increase in unconfirmed detections was even more dramatic, from four in 1979 to a high of 22 in 1982. Most of these incidents occurred in the vicinity of coastal military facilities such as naval bases, shore defenses, radar installations, critical port facilities, or the various mine and sensor networks protecting Sweden's coastal approaches. The highest number of incidents were registered in the area of Karlskrona, various strategic points along the Gulf of Bothnia, and the large complex of bases in the general vicinity of Musko and the southern Stockholm archipelago.

The commission indicated that the Harsfjarden incident was but the most recent example of a "new type" of operation being conducted in Swedish waters since at least 1980. In contrast to earlier operations, recent incursions had been carried out deep within Sweden's inner waters and were believed to involve the coordinated use of multiple submarines. Two categories of such operations had been observed: the concentrated deployment of more than one submarine against a single target set as in the Harsfjarden case, and coordinated penetrations against more than one target group along the length of Sweden's eastern coast. The commission concluded that at least six submarines were involved in the operation in Harsfjarden sound. Three of these were believed to be mini-submarines, at least one of which was a type of tracked vehicle capable of crawling along the seabed. Four submarines, including two mini-subs, penetrated deep into Harsfjarden itself, while the remaining two vessels remained in the waters around Mysingen, covering the approaches to Musko island. Track and keel

¹²Ministry of Defense, 1983, pp. 29-37, 39-45.

¹³Agrell, 1983, pp. 270-271. For the initial account of Swedish actions during the Harsfjarden incident, see *Anti-submarine Operations in the Southern Stockholm Archipelago in October 1982*, Ministry of Defense, 1982, pp. 29-60.

depressions found on the sea floor also indicated that at some point in the operation a Soviet mini-sub had penetrated into the central archipelago as far as the port of Stockholm. Further mini-sub operations were conducted in the main approaches to the Musko naval complex and Oxelosund harbor. At least one mini-sub, and presumably a mother ship, was subsequently found to have returned to the Harsfjarden area after the ASW operation ended on November 1.¹⁴

The commission noted that no direct evidence linked the Harsfjarden incursion and other previous underwater actions to any particular country of origin, it concluded that they could only have been carried out by the Soviet Union. It was widely assumed, even before the 1981 grounding of U-137, that the Soviets were behind the incursions, but this was the first time an official body had publicly admitted it. The commission arrived at this conclusion through indirect means, by comparing sonar and signal recordings made during the Harsfjarden hunt with those recorded at the time of U-137 incident. On the basis of these observations, it was clear that at least one of the submarines operating in Harsfjarden was W-class, similar to the one that ran aground off Karlskrona. The only Baltic states in possession of Whiskey class submarines were Poland, which maintained two, and the Soviet Union, which at that time was believed to have between 10 and 12. On the basis of this comparison, and possibly other evidence not openly revealed, the commission noted that the Harsfjarden operation had been conducted by the Soviet Navy. The commission further noted that it was evident in the course of the ASW search that the intruders possessed a detailed knowledge of the location and characteristics of local underwater mine lines and listening devices, suggesting that this was not the first time Soviet forces had operated in the Harsfjarden-Mysingen area.

The commission concluded that Soviet submarine operations in Swedish waters were motivated principally by military rather than political interests in the Nordic region, and the continuation of these operations posed a serious threat to Swedish security and its policy of armed neutrality. According to the final commission report, "the scale, character and thrust of these violations show that the violations themselves," as well as what they might imply "for different alternative crisis and war scenarios," must be seen as a threat to "Sweden's ability

¹⁴Swedish authorities made an additional revelation concerning Soviet operations in the Harsfjarden area in September 1983, when it was announced that a keel depression photographed near Malsten Island in the general area of Harsfjarden-Mysingen indicated that a Soviet submarine had indeed returned to the area after the incident was thought to have been brought to a conclusion. The keel depression matched that of the W-class submarine that ran aground at Karlskrona sound in October 1981.

to keep hostilities at bay" in a future war in Europe, whether or not it chose to assume a position of neutrality.¹⁵ Further operations, the commission noted, could no longer be tolerated and should be stopped by whatever means necessary.

To give teeth to this recommendation, 400-500 million crowns were immediately allocated to the Navy's ASW budget, which had fallen on hard times over the previous decade. Apart from the acquisition of additional ASW platforms, funding was provided to overhaul the Navy's underwater detection, surveillance, and identification capabilities with the introduction of a series of new acoustic and nonacoustic systems. Work was also accelerated on the development and acquisition of three new antisubmarine weapons, the *Malin*, a magnetic limpet device designed to attach itself to a submarine hull and give off a signal identifying the location of the intruder; the *Elma*, a shaped charge weapon designed to blow a small hole in a submarine hull to induce flooding and force the boat to the surface; and a specialized "incident torpedo," a modified version of the Swedish Navy's standard TP42 torpedo. The combat warhead of the TP42 was replaced with a smaller charge designed not to destroy an intruding submarine, but to damage its rudder and screws, making it impossible for the boat to maneuver.¹⁶

The findings of the Submarine Defense Commission also led to a series of changes in the Royal Navy's rules of engagement. Before the Harafjorden operation, Swedish defense forces were given very little freedom of action when responding to underwater contacts, even those that were confirmed to be foreign submarines. Royal Navy orders stipulated that any foreign submarine be identified and escorted to the open sea. Under no circumstances was the Navy permitted to fire on an intruder without permission from the Chief of the Defense Staff, who received his instructions from the political leadership.¹⁷ According to the new regulations, foreign submarines in Swedish inner waters could be fired on without warning in an effort to force them to the

¹⁵The above discussion drawn from Ministry of Defense, 1983, pp. 66-77. See also Bildt, 1983.

¹⁶According to one account, the *Malin* was used successfully during the Harafjorden incident. A *Malin* was fired and attached itself to one of several intruders in Harafjorden bay for some 20 minutes when a diver, who emerged from the submarine, managed to dislodge the device from the hull. See the discussion by Ries, 1983, p. 754. Since that time, there have been no reported successes with either *Malin* or *Elma* in the many cases of employment. It is not known whether the newly modified TP42 has been used against a Soviet submarine.

¹⁷These changes were initially ordered in July 1982. They were not to go into effect, however, until one year later after a final review by parliament to determine whether they were still warranted. The decision to move ahead with the new Rules of Engagement was reinforced by the Defense Commission Report. They went into effect July 1, 1983.

surface. Though prohibited from destroying an intruder on contact, the ROEs accepted the possibility that a submarine might be either damaged or destroyed in the course of this action. Intruders discovered in Sweden's outer waters were to be warned and permitted to leave the area. In the event they remained or attempted to move deeper into the archipelago, on-the-scene commanders were given the authority to treat the intrusion as a violation of Sweden's inner waters and fire on the boat in an effort to force it to surface.¹⁸

Although the Palme government was not in full agreement with all the commission's findings, the release of the report resulted in a second strong note of protest and the recall of Sweden's ambassador in Moscow. Soviet violations, according to the protest note, were "deliberate and unlawful attempts to explore Sweden's sea territory" and a grave breach of the accepted rules of international conduct. Prime Minister Palme elaborated on these statements at a press conference held on the day the commission's findings were made public. Until the Harsfjarden incident, he noted, Swedish authorities had shown "leniency" in their response to foreign intruders caught in the act of violating Sweden's territorial integrity, but that would no longer be the case. Sweden, he declared, would use all the means at its disposal to ensure that such operations were not continued in the future. The credibility of Sweden's policy of armed neutrality now required that the country demonstrate it was fully capable of defending itself against these and other threats to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. From this point forward, Palme warned, violators could "count on the Swedish government to order the military to sink an intruder at once."¹⁹

The Soviet reply to Sweden's protest was issued on May 6, in the midst of a major submarine incursion in the Sundsvall region of central Sweden and nine days after a Soviet submarine was detected in the area of Hardangerfjord in northern Norway. Swedish charges, according to Moscow, were "totally divorced from reality." The Soviet Union, it was claimed, was a strict adherent to the "principles of international law" and would never knowingly violate the territorial boundaries of another state. Nor could it have done so given the location of

¹⁸These changes, as it turned out, were to apply only to naval commanders and not to the coastal defense forces, which control Sweden's extensive mine defenses. The country's mine lines, which protect most if not all of Sweden's port and naval facilities, are its primary means of defense against intruding submarines. Unlike most Swedish ASW weapons, which are designed to damage rather than destroy a submarine, a mine detonation in the immediate vicinity of a passing submarine would almost certainly result in its destruction. Authority to activate the mines, therefore, continues to reside with the civil and military leadership.

¹⁹Prime Minister Palme, Press Conference Transcript, April 26, 1983, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

its submarines. Based on "precise and carefully verified information," Moscow insisted, Russian "submarines were not in Swedish territorial waters at the time given in the note; nor did they come within 30km of these waters" in the course of the month long operation. The Soviets, in turn, leveled their own countercharges, declaring that the accusations made by the Swedish government were "untenable, baseless, an unfriendly act, and were "directed at undermining good neighborly relations with the Soviet Union." Sweden, Moscow charged, had "taken it upon itself the ugly role of spreading fabrications about the Soviet Union and (had) become involved in a campaign designed to cast suspicions on the USSR's peaceful foreign policy." The government of the USSR, the Soviets concluded, "constantly seeks to develop good neighborly relations with Sweden in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding." Swedish accusations, it was clear, if they were to continue, would further damage Stockholm's relations with Moscow.²⁰ Soviet violations, however, were to carry on. See Fig. 2.

SOVIET OPERATIONS, 1984-1989

The violation of Swedish territorial waters has continued, clearly establishing a pattern of submarine intrusions across every Soviet regime from Brezhnev to Gorbachev. Though there have been fluctuations in the incidence of Soviet intrusions over time, the nature of these operations remains similar to those witnessed in the early 1980s. The same can be said of other areas of Soviet clandestine activity in Sweden, including, apart from conventional sub-marine operations, mini-submersibles, combat swimmers, and a wide ranging intelligence program on Swedish soil. Activities in each of these areas have been conducted on a regular basis since 1983. The secrecy that has surrounded these incidents makes it difficult to develop a comprehensive picture of what has been going on, but an overview of recent events is possible.

Conventional Submarine Operations

Most Soviet special operations on and around Swedish territory are still conducted by Soviet conventional submarines. The single largest operation to date since the Harsfjorden incident was carried out in Karlskrona sound in February 1984. Karlskrona II, as the incident was dubbed, began on the night of February 8, when an underwater intruder was detected entering the 5 by 15 km bay. The first

²⁰*Dagens Nyheter*, May 7, 1983; *Izvestia*, May 15, 1983; Leitenberg, 1987, pp. 62-77.

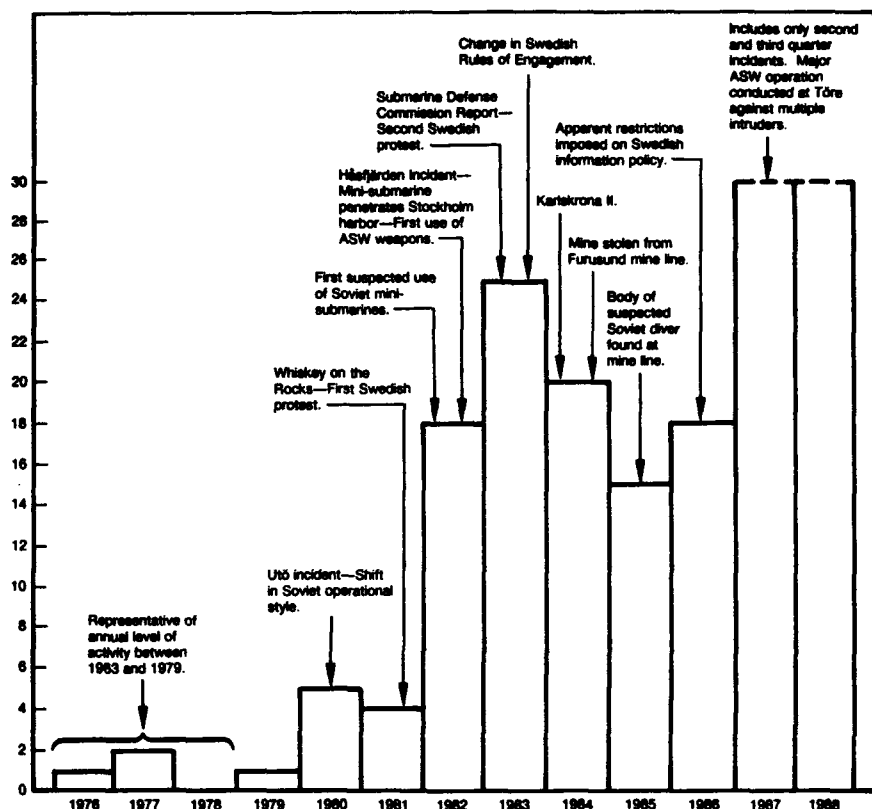


Fig. 2—Confirmed and probable Soviet operations in Swedish waters: Trends, 1976–1988

indication of foreign submarine activity was registered by bottom-mounted magnetic anomaly arrays and subsequently confirmed by hydrophone, surface radar, sonar, and several visual periscope sightings.²¹ Over the course of the ASW search, Swedish forces managed to compile over 600 detections of foreign intruders and expend some 22 depth charges in what proved to be a fruitless attempt to force their contacts to the surface. Swedish analysts concluded that four categories of intruders had participated in the incursion: conventional submarines, mini-submarines, diver vehicles, and underwater

²¹Ellis, 1986, pp. 96–99; Leitenberg, 1989, pp. 80–84; *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter*, February 10–March 15, 1984.

swimmers. Although the number of Soviet submarines involved in the operation was never specifically determined, at least three were detected together in the area at one point in the search. A fourth and possibly a fifth boat were believed to have been stationed outside the channel exits to the bay during several periods in the operation. The ASW effort was finally ended in late March, after several attempts were made to intercept contacts detected breaking out of the area. Swedish authorities completed the search with a close investigation of the sea bed. The results of this investigation, however, were never publicized.

Since Karlskrona II, the reported incidence of submarine incursions has fluctuated, but the overall number of violations remains high, even by the standards of the early 1980s. According to available statistics, the largest number of actions to date occurred in 1983 when Swedish authorities registered an estimated 25 separate certain or probable incidents involving conventional submarines. This figure must be added to an estimated 38 "possible" (unconfirmed) detections of alien submarines to get a complete picture of the level of activity that year. In 1984, which began with the Karlskrona operation, roughly 60 incidents were compiled, of which 20 were either certain or probable intrusions. Apart from the Karlskrona search, other major ASW searches were carried out in Harnosand area (August), where foreign intruders were detected observing a Royal Navy fleet exercise, and at Harsfjarden (November), where submarines were once again detected in the vicinity of the Musko naval complex. The number of both confirmed and possible incursions appeared to drop again in 1985. Fifteen confirmed and only 19 probable incidents are thought to have been registered throughout the course of the year. Each "incident" refers to a single integrated operation, but many of those involve multiple submarines. Although the number of individual incidents in 1985 appears to have decreased, the number of major operations involving multiple Soviet intruders appears to have grown over that registered during the previous year. Major incursions in 1985 were identified at Goteborg (March, May); off Karlskrona (April, August); in the area of Gullmarsfjord (June); off Sundsvall (July, November); Harsfjarden (July); and in the region of the southern Stockholm archipelago (July, November).²² These operations make 1985 a significant year in the Soviet submarine campaign.²³

²²*Orientering*, annual and quarterly submarine reports, 1985.

²³During this same period, the Soviets announced refinements in the procedures that they would henceforth carry out in pursuing foreign submarines caught in their territorial waters. Any submarine caught in Soviet territorial seas would be signaled with two series of explosions with three explosions in each series. The interval between explosions

Soviet submarine operations continued throughout 1986 and into the first two quarters of 1987. According to available estimates, the level of Soviet activity appears to have increased slightly from that observed in 1985. Although the estimated number of category one incursions carried out over the course of the year actually rose from 15 to 18, a somewhat smaller number of these can be classified as major operations; information on Soviet activity became much more difficult to acquire in 1986 than in previous years, making any assessment somewhat speculative. Major incidents were registered in the Stockholm archipelago (May); the Aland Sea (June); along the coast of Gotland (June); in the area of the Tore archipelago (June); moving in the Kalmarsund (July, October); and south of Hudviksvall (July-August). The Stockholm incident resulted in a major ASW search by Royal Navy forces lasting over a period of weeks. Some 30 depth charges and 60 *Elma* incident weapons were reported to have been used against what were believed to have been several Soviet submarines and mini-submarines.²⁴

Unfortunately, Swedish authorities have not yet published a full statistical picture of Soviet underwater operations in 1987. Those figures that have been made available, however, suggest that the number of operations carried out in 1987 may have actually increased over the numbers registered in earlier years. Based on statistics published in the second and third quarters alone we know that there were at least 30 category one incidents in Swedish waters during the course of the year. To this number must be added an unspecified number of category one incidents that were registered by the Royal Navy during the fourth quarter. Although Stockholm has not released the numbers, it acknowledged in January 1988 that there were a larger number of known incursions in this period than during the same period in 1986. As in earlier years, many of these incursions were either known or suspected to have involved more than one intruder. The largest of these operations was conducted in July, in restricted waters near the

would be one minute and the interval between series would be three minutes. If within ten minutes of receiving this signal the offending submarine had not yet surfaced, it would be forced up or sunk. Alternative signals could be given with sonar. This warning took effect July 1985.

²⁴*Orientering*, annual and quarterly reports, 1986. Swedish submarine reports had become much less detailed by 1986. These official accounts must be supplemented by Swedish press reports. Press accounts of each major incident are available in *Svenska Dagbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter*. In the fall of 1985, 12 naval officers publicly criticized the Palme government for attempting to minimize the importance of the submarine campaign and publishing overly conservative statistics on the number of intrusions that were actually carried out in Swedish waters. See the account in *Svenska Dagbladet*, November 10, 1985. Similar charges were leveled against the government in 1987, *Dagens Nyheter*, June 29, 1987.

Swedish naval facility at Lulea off the coast of Norland. The incident was widely reported in Sweden, Western Europe, and the United States, and involved an intense and extended search by Royal Navy units over a period of weeks. These indicators as well as discussions with Swedish military and political authorities suggest that 1987 was a very active year for the Soviet submarine campaign in Swedish waters.²⁵

The Swedish government chose to stop publishing (but not collecting) statistics on foreign intrusions in late 1987. The Chief of the Defense Staff continues to publish quarterly and annual incident reports, but they are purposely vague, not only about specific incursions but about the number of different types of incidents that are believed to have occurred. Without such figures it is impossible to put together a complete picture of the scope of Soviet operations over the past year and a half. What Swedish defense sources have reported is that these incidents continued unabated through 1988 and into the first quarter of 1989. According to the most recent *Annual Report on Submarine Intrusions*, issued in February 1989, foreign intrusions into Swedish waters for all of 1988 occurred at approximately the same rate as in 1987. If so, given what we know of the rate of intrusions in 1987, there were at least 30 confirmed or probable operations carried out in Swedish waters throughout the course of the year. The pattern and apparent orientation of these operations, it was observed, also remains similar to what has been observed in previous years. Most of these incidents, it was reported, occurred on the east coast, in the eastern military district, and in the larger Stockholm archipelago. As in the past, the majority appear to have been carried out in or near potential targets of military interest. The majority of these intrusions, it was noted, were confirmed through combined technical means—including magnetic and acoustic signature readings and communications intercepts.²⁶

The most publicized incidents during this period occurred in Havringefjorden and Gustaf Dahlen near Oxelosund in the southern

²⁵*Orientering*, annual and quarterly submarine reports, for 1987. See also the special sub report released on the Torefjorden operation. In 1987, in response to continuing foreign intrusions into Swedish inner waters, Stockholm set up an "alarm center," which anyone nationwide who believed they had spotted a submarine could report to. The number, 90-000, which until this time had traditionally been used to request assistance from such agencies as the police or fire department, would now also be used to connect the caller with local military authorities. This was reported in *Dagens Nyheter*, January 28, 1987.

²⁶*Orientering*, Incidenter 1988, Forsvarstabens Informationsavdelning, February 19, 1989. See also the discussion of the Annual Submarine Report presented in *Dagens Nyheter*, February 17, 1989, p. 6.

Stockholm archipelago (May-June, 1988) and in the area of Vindo Strommer in the central Stockholm archipelago (January-February, 1989). The largest of these operations was that carried out in Havringe-fjorden, in a series of engagements that became widely known as the "Havringe Bay Action."²⁷ What distinguished this incident from most earlier operations was both the size of the Swedish ASW effort—the initial contact occurred in the midst of a large Swedish ASW exercise—and the announcement that for the first time Swedish forces may have succeeded in damaging a foreign intruder. The presence of foreign intruders was initially confirmed through a combination of visual and acoustic observations and eventually through the discovery of fresh hull impressions on the sea floor. In the course of the hunt, which lasted four days, Swedish naval units reportedly expended between 100 and 200 depth charges and antisubmarine grenades.²⁸ According to Rear Admiral Claes Tornberg, Commander of the Coastal Fleet, Swedish units had "never before been so close to hitting a foreign submarine" and may have actually succeeded in inflicting some minimal level of damage. "The submarine," he noted, "was taken by surprise and forced to react" with the result that it was forced out of the area.²⁹

Although speculation that Swedish units may have actually hit a foreign intruder was later downplayed, it gained further credence for a period of time with the discovery of eight pieces of foreign submarine rescue equipment in the southern and northern Stockholm archipelago. The equipment, which included pieces of an underwater breathing apparatus, was found between early May and late August 1988 and was initially linked to an unexplained mine explosion in the Uto-Orno area in May and the Havringe Bay operation in June. At the time of the announcement, Swedish sources noted that the equipment was similar to items found periodically during the 1970s and early 1980s. These sources indicated that it had been impossible to identify the equipment's country of origin, but it clearly was not manufactured in Sweden and could only have been brought into the country by foreign intruders in the course of the previous year.³⁰

Public speculation as to the nationality of the intruders naturally centered on the Soviet Union. This was given further impetus a week or two after the Havringe hunt was concluded when the Swedish news-

²⁷See the discussion in *Marin Nytt*, No. 4, 1988, pp. 4-5; *Svenska Dagbladet*, August 1, 1988, p. 7, and February 5, 1989, p. 6.

²⁸*Dagens Nyheter*, September 28, 1988, p. 6.

²⁹*Dagens Nyheter*, January 16, 1989, p. 9.

³⁰For discussion of these finds see *Svenska Dagbladet*, July 23, 1988, p. 6.

paper *Aftonbladet* announced that "a Soviet government official" with "an expertise in Scandinavian affairs" had revealed in two interviews that Moscow had indeed been responsible for sending submarines into Swedish inner waters between the late 1970s and 1985. Sweden, according to this source, "happened to come within [Moscow's] reach." Soviet military planners, it was argued, did not trust Swedish neutrality, which they believed could fall westward in the event of a general war. "The military [therefore] had a need to know Swedish waters in advance, before things got serious. They had to know where they could hide from the Swedish Navy and from Swedish electronic equipment for tracking submarines." These activities, the source noted, were similar in kind to the operations carried out "by all countries" interested in determining how a potential adversary's military forces could be employed in war.³¹

Although the unnamed Soviet official indicated that the intrusions had been halted once Gorbachev assumed power in March 1985, his comments led to a rash of denials by various elements within the Soviet foreign and defense ministries. The day after *Aftonbladet's* announcement, Soviet Ambassador to Stockholm Boris Pankin stated "categorically [and] with great certainty that there have never been any Russian submarines in the Swedish archipelagoes or territorial waters." "The Soviet Union," he declared, has nothing to do with the violations."³² This view was echoed by G. I. Gerasimov, chief spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who called the statement "absurd" and questioned whether the anonymous Soviet official cited by *Aftonbladet* had not been made up out of whole cloth.³³ For the next several months Soviet spokesmen continued to deny that Soviet submarines had ever purposely ventured into Swedish waters. In an interview published in mid-September, the Commander of the Baltic Fleet Admiral Vitaly Ivanov declared that his "experience of work in the GHQ of the Navy until 1985 and as Commander of the Baltic Fleet" allowed him "to say without a shade of doubt that no Soviet submarine has ever approached Sweden's territorial waters closer than 50 to 70 kilometers." Referring to underwater films apparently presented to the Soviets by Swedish authorities purporting to establish the fact that Soviet submarines were operating in Swedish waters, Ivanov stated that upon examination he had determined that they "were all a fake intended [to confuse] nonprofessional people who do not know how a

³¹See *Svenska Dagbladet*, June 30, 1988, p. 6.

³²Cited in *Svenska Dagbladet*, June 30, 1988, p. 6.

³³TASS Report, July 1, 1988, reprinted in FBIS-SOV-88-131, July 8, 1988.

submarine operates and moves."³⁴ This view was reiterated a week and a half later by then Chief of the Soviet General Staff Marshal Akhromeyev who declared that Soviet submarine commanders were under "strict orders" not to violate Swedish territorial seas and that any claims to the contrary were therefore "groundless" and "incomprehensible."³⁵

In the midst of these denials, Stockholm stood by its by now established policy of refusing to point the finger at Moscow. The Havringefjorden action, it was subsequently reported had been only the most recent of a series of nine live-fire operations carried out between Swedish naval units and foreign submarines over the previous two months.³⁶ In each of these cases, as in the past, Swedish spokesmen claimed ignorance of where the foreign intruders might be coming from. In a February 1989 news conference, Chief of the Defense Staff Bengt Gustafson appeared to even pull back from earlier statements by refusing to confirm that these intrusions were actually being carried out by an organized state. While noting that the pattern of intrusions in 1988 remained consistent with previous practice, an observation that indicated "it is probably the same organization as earlier that is engaged in the enterprise against Sweden," he refused when questioned to replace the word "organization" with "nation," explaining that this was a "concept that [had] not yet been established unambiguously." The 1988 *Submarine Report* gave clear evidence that the foreign submarine campaign was continuing, but it provided no further insight than any earlier *Report* on the larger issue of who might be responsible.³⁷

This remains the public view of the Swedish government; its private perspective was revealed publicly only a month earlier when the Commander in Chief of the Swedish Navy, Vice Admiral Bengt Schuback, declared that through a process of elimination, if not by other means, one could conclude that the Soviet Union was and always had been behind the submarine campaign.³⁸ Several weeks later *Dagens Nyheter* indicated that the classified annex to the 1988 *Annual Submarine Report* essentially confirmed Schuback's statements. These charges, like all similar charges in the past, were promptly denied by government sources and set off a new series of attacks by the official Soviet

³⁴APN Military Bulletin, September 17, 1988, reprinted in FBIS-SOV-88-212, November 2, 1988, p. 3.

³⁵Cited in *Dagens Nyheter*, September 28, 1988, p. 10.

³⁶*Washington Times*, June 23, 1988, p. 1.

³⁷*Dagens Nyheter*, February 17, 1989, p. 6.

³⁸Stockholm International Service, January 31, 1989, reported in FBIS-WEU-89-020, p. 30.

press, which declared them to be "newspaper canards," "hackneyed allegations," and against "the principles of goodneighborliness."³⁹ Admiral Schuback, it was claimed, was a man of "diabolical subtlety" who sought to pour "highly flammable fuel... on the almost extinguished bonfire of the Swede's periscope experiences." Sweden, Soviet commentators declared, was once again in the grip of "the virus of the 'periscope disease,'" which had resulted in a new outbreak of "antisubmarine fever." As in the past, it was suggested, once Swedish authorities came to their senses they would discover that what they originally thought were submarines were actually such phenomena as "the leg of a floating upturned table," the "trunk of a half submerged tree" or even "shoals of herring" that had been mistaken for underwater intruders.⁴⁰

Related Soviet Operations

There have been several episodes in which Soviet divers are believed to have been seen leaving or entering the water. The most publicized of these is still the case of Karlskrona II, where Swedish units responded to at least five reported landings by foreign frogmen. On three occasions, between the nights of March 3rd and 6th, shots were fired at swimmers observed leaving the water on the island of Almo, at the western end of Karlskrona sound. Several days earlier, after the first report that divers had been seen coming ashore, a funeral procession was reported to have been stopped by a military patrol, which examined the coffin to ensure that it contained nothing more than the deceased. A search of the area uncovered food caches hidden in a nearby wood, assumed by observers to belong to Soviet intruders. Swedish authorities appear to have been close to acquiring hard evidence of such involvement in late 1985, when three Swedish fishermen pulled in a net that had entangled and finally drowned a diver in restricted waters in the Stockholm archipelago. The fishermen, who had illegally laid their nets up against a local mine line, panicked and dropped the net back into the water. By the time Swedish investigators arrived the body was gone. A laboratory analysis revealed that the diver had been cut from the net with a knife or other sharp object, leading investigators to conclude that the body was that of a foreign frogman who had been investigating the mine line.⁴¹

³⁹TASS Report, February 1, 1986, cited in FBIS-SOV-86-021, p. 46.

⁴⁰*Izvestiya*, February 14, 1986, p. 5.

⁴¹*Ellis*, 1986, p. 96; *Svenska Dagbladet*, January 4, 1987.

The majority of such incidents have never been made public. Over the years, however, many reports of possible activity by Soviet divers have come to light. Apart from those incidents mentioned above, special force units are believed to have been involved in the initial Harsfjarden operation (1982); in several incidents in the vicinity of Stockholm (1982, 1983); Sundsvall (1983, 1984); Sandhamn (1983); in the area of Gavle (1983); and off Musko Island (1985). It is widely assumed that most of the operations involving Soviet mini-submarines have also involved the use of combat swimmers, with the mini-sub delivering divers to the target area. On several occasions, Soviet swimmers are believed to have been involved in minor acts of sabotage, ranging from the destruction of submarine nets, break-ins ashore, to the disruption and destruction of underwater mine lines. In 1983 Soviet frogmen are believed to have severed and carried away a mine tied to the Furusund mine chain located in the northern Stockholm archipelago. Similar incidents were reported to have occurred in 1976 and in the fall of 1984.⁴² It is not possible to know the full extent or nature of Soviet activities in this area. Swedish authorities are themselves uncertain. On the basis of what has been revealed, however, as well as from private conversations with Swedish defense officials, the employment of combat swimmers is a regular feature of Soviet operations in Swedish waters.⁴³

Perhaps the most alarming of these recent incidents came to a head in 1986 when it was announced that Soviet intelligence personnel (GRU), posing as Polish art dealers, had called at the homes of some 120 Swedish pilots for the apparent purpose of determining their identities, family situations, and routines. According to Swedish authorities, the larger objective of these visits was to support a Soviet plan to decapitate the Royal Air Force in the event of war. Swedish pilots would be gunned down in their homes before they were able to answer their mobilization call. Polish "art salesmen," who had for years visited Sweden for the alleged purpose of selling their wares had evidently begun to intensify their efforts in late 1984 and early 1985. This increased activity, against the backdrop of the continuing submarine crisis, prompted a major investigation by Sweden's Security Service (SAPO) and Swedish intelligence.⁴⁴ It was soon apparent that

⁴²Leitenberg, 1987, p. 71.

⁴³*Svenska Dagbladet*, January 4, 1987; April 9, 1987, August 10, 1987.

⁴⁴See Sieff, 1986. Since this incident Swedish military personnel have been ordered to report any suspicions they might have about door-to-door salesmen visiting their homes. Those visited have been requested to note the time of day they were contacted, the number of salesmen, physical description, nationality, the stated reason for the activity, and what is being offered for sale; see *Dagens Nyheter*, January 29, 1988.

virtually the only homes visited by the so-called art dealers were those of Air Force officers. Intelligence inquiries were subsequently able to trace several of the individuals to the Soviet GRU. The evident objective of this Soviet planning effort was well conceived. The Royal Air Force, which is still one of the most capable in Europe, suffers from a severe shortage of experienced pilots because Air Force personnel are not required to serve, alternative employment with SAS and even Swedish domestic carriers is very attractive, and the RSAF reserve system is limited. Trained personnel, both pilots and ground crews, have become one of the major vulnerabilities facing the Air Force planner. Any operation that was able to effectively target this group would cripple Sweden's Air Force before it was able to get off the ground.⁴⁵

These activities represent what appears to be a broad program of Soviet intelligence gathering and active measures on Swedish soil. Between 1980 and 1986, 15 Soviet bloc citizens were expelled from the country on charges of espionage, a fraction of the number either known or suspected of being involved in such activities. Soviets and East Europeans regularly turn up outside Swedish defense installations, dispersed airstrips, mobilization centers, weapons storage sites, civil defense facilities, communications nodes, and other potential targets of military interest. They appear as tourists, berry pickers, bird watchers, picnickers, lost campers, and sightseers. Among the worst offenders are Soviet bloc TIR trucks,⁴⁶ which regularly travel Sweden's roads between the Soviet Union, Finland, and other points in Western Europe. The routes traveled by these vehicles have little to do with the main arteries used by most commercial travelers, where factors such as time, fuel expenditure, and due date are matters of profit and loss. They appear to be charted only to bring truck and driver to locations that are likely to be of concern to Soviet military planners, regardless of the distances involved. Over 200 such incidents were logged by Swedish authorities in 1985 and 1986 alone.⁴⁷ The Swedish press, which has begun to monitor the movements of Soviet TIR trucks

⁴⁵In response to this development, Swedish authorities moved all active duty pilots at government expense in 1987. Similar measures were taken for other personnel believed to be at risk. Certain key Air Force personnel were reportedly moved to defended compounds, and all pilots were said to have been issued personal weapons for home use. This incident appears to have also accelerated efforts to expand and upgrade the RSAF's reserve system through regularized refresher training.

⁴⁶Refers to the international customs convention governing the transport of goods across national frontiers. Signatories of this agreement, including Sweden, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe, are bound to permit other parties to the convention to transit their territory without inspection in sealed trucks operating under the TIR carnet. The Soviets and the East Europeans are known to have long used such vehicles for intelligence purposes throughout NATO Europe.

⁴⁷See for example, *Svenska Dagbladet*, November 24, 1986.

over the past two years, has come to refer to these vehicles as "subs on wheels."

What does it all mean? What factors have prompted the Soviets to initiate and continue these operations? What costs and risks have they incurred to do so? In what way are the submarine campaign and related Soviet actions ashore designed to support Moscow's political or military goals in Sweden and the Nordic states? How can one explain the general continuity in the level and nature of Soviet efforts since 1980, a period that in other respects has been one of considerable political change?

III. SUBMARINE OPERATIONS AND SOVIET NORDIC PLANNING

For many, Soviet submarine operations in Swedish waters are yet another example proving that fact is stranger than fiction. A small percentage of Swedes continue to believe that these operations really are fictitious, although the number of individuals holding this view has decreased precipitously since 1985.¹ There is not now nor is there likely to be any consensus regarding probable Soviet objectives. The problem is not that one cannot conjure up a plausible rationale to explain Soviet behavior, but that the plausible or at least possible explanations are so numerous. Even the Swedish government remains divided on the question of Soviet motives. This section will first briefly review some of the explanations various observers have advanced since 1980 and second provide what I believe to be the most likely rationale underlying Soviet operations in Sweden. This explanation is based on what is publicly known of the submarine crisis, the range of Soviet actions on Swedish territory, and likely Soviet military interests and war plans in the Nordic area.

THEORIES OF SOVIET BEHAVIOR

The Political Motive

Most observers during the early 1980s seemed to believe that Soviet operations in Swedish waters were politically motivated. Most of these explanations were vaguely cast. All believed, however, that in one way or another the Soviets were attempting to intimidate Sweden, compromise its policy of armed neutrality, and reduce its political and military contacts with the West. One school of thought, subscribed to by many within Sweden itself, argued that Moscow was ultimately rather distrustful of Sweden's claim to neutrality. Sweden, in the Soviet view, was too pro-Western. Although a proclaimed neutral, its society, economy, and government looked to the West. Swedish security planning, by contrast, looked eastward, toward the Soviet Union. Although not a member of any military bloc, Sweden's position and military orientation have worked to the advantage of the West and

¹The submarine campaign has spawned at least two novels in recent years, Wood, 1986; and Winter, 1988.

against Soviet interests. Soviet submarine incursions, in this view, were a calculated attempt to frighten the Swedish government into assuming a more balanced political posture with regard to NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Such a move would be variously manifested in a reduction in Swedish military purchases from the West, an expanded dialogue with Moscow, greater Swedish cooperation with Soviet efforts to establish a Nordic nuclear free zone, and, in general, a more active attempt to find common ground with Soviet plans to turn the Baltic into a "sea of peace."²

A second school of thought, also political in nature, began with a quite different premise, claiming that Moscow was attempting to use Sweden's neutrality policy to pull the country closer into the Soviet orbit. The issue here was not the false claim of Swedish neutrality, but the government's fear of compromising its neutral position if it responded to Soviet incursions with force. The Soviets, in this view, were attempting to blackmail the Swedes into assuming a more active pro-Soviet stance by forcing them to choose between sinking a submarine or caving into Soviet pressure. Moscow, confident that Swedish authorities would never permit a direct attack on a Soviet submarine, would expose Sweden's bankrupt claim that it was able and willing to defend its territorial integrity, leaving the government with no choice but to reorient its relations with the Soviet Union or risk an escalation in Soviet violations. According to this school of thought, the Soviet objective was to force the Swedes into a position similar to that of Finland, where Moscow would be permitted to define the acceptable parameters of Swedish foreign policy. If successful, such a move would have all the advantages noted above, but would also open up the possibility that Sweden might be used to the Soviet Union's positive advantage in war.³

Assorted Conspiracy Theories

The strange character of many of these incidents has also given rise to several off-beat theories concerning Soviet intentions and possible alternative explanations of the submarine crisis. These interpretations persist in the absence of any hard insights into the deliberative process that must certainly underlie Soviet actions. As noted earlier, there are still some, including members of the Swedish press, who refuse to

²See, for example, *Hufvudstadsbladet* (Helsinki), December 9, 1964.

³These alternations are considered by Oldberg, 1962. See also the discussion by Amundsen, 1965; Ries, 1964; and Lindberg, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1967.

believe that the Soviet Union is actually behind these operations.⁴ Several commentators have actually suggested that NATO is responsible for these incidents.⁵ According to proponents of this view, these operations are designed to implicate Moscow, alienate the Swedish populace, and force the country into an anti-Soviet alliance under NATO's auspices. Others persist in believing that these incidents have never really occurred at all. To substantiate this claim, they point to the fact that the Royal Navy has never once succeeded in sinking a foreign submarine or forcing one to the surface. The indirect evidence compiled over the years implicating the Soviet Union, it is argued, (keel depressions, bottom tracks, signal intelligence, etc.) is actually the work of the Navy itself, which has sought to use the submarine issue to alarm the public and claim a greater share of the defense budget. The number of people subscribing to such views has steadily diminished, but these attitudes are still in evidence.⁶

Still others, while agreeing that the Soviets are undoubtedly responsible, argue that the underlying motivation is less apparent than generally assumed. One popular theory has suggested that Soviet submarine incursions are nothing more than an elaborate deception to divert Western attention away from what would be the real Nordic objective in time of war, the north cape of Norway. At least one observer has argued that the Soviet Union's real objective may have been to induce the Swedes into reallocating resources away from the Royal Air Force to the Navy. According to this line of reasoning, it is the Air Force rather than the Navy that poses the greatest potential challenge to Soviet military interests and wartime ambitions in the Baltic. By graphically illustrating the porous nature of the country's sea frontiers, Soviet underwater incursions would force the Swedes into expanding their ASW effort, thereby reducing available Air Force resources.⁷ Others have argued that the Soviets may have hoped that the Swedes would seek Western assistance in the ASW field and introduce a range

⁴These skeptics have included high ranking members of the Swedish government. The former U.S. ambassador to Sweden, Rodney Kennedy-Minot, has reported that the former Swedish Foreign Minister, Lennart Bodstrom held such a view. See Kennedy-Minot, 1987.

⁵See, for example, *Dagens Nyheter*, May 15, 1984; February 3, 1987.

⁶See for example the discussion in *Dagens Nyheter*, November 30, 1985; and "The Joke Submarine," *Foreign Report*, February 4, 1988.

⁷This possibility was suggested by the late Jonathan Alford of the International Institute of Strategic Studies. That the Swedes would both maintain the level of Royal Air Force spending and increase the Navy's annual allocation by increasing the defense budget was apparently not considered likely. This is, in fact, what has happened. Cited in Leitenberg, *Soviet Submarine Operations*, pp. 133-135. See also *Dagens Nyheter*, December 10, 1984.

of new ASW technologies that the Soviets might then promptly steal. A second variant on this rationale suggests that the real motive behind the Soviet incursions was to test Soviet submarine tactics and technologies against the latest Western countermeasures, which the Swedes would acquire in the aftermath of Soviet violations.

The Military Motive

More and more observers have concluded that Soviet operations, quite apart from their political effects, were probably first initiated to satisfy certain military objectives. What these objectives might be has been subject to widespread speculation. Until 1983 and the release of the *Submarine Commission Report*, many observers within Sweden, including the Prime Minister, were inclined to believe that the Soviet Navy was carrying out these operations without the knowledge or consent of the political leadership. Palme's protests to Moscow were offered in the hope that the civilian authority, having been made aware of what was going on, would bring the military to heel. Many concluded that the incursions were simply being carried out either as standard operating procedure, for general training purposes, or because the Soviets took an overly possessive view of the Baltic sea. When they failed to stop in the wake of Swedish protests, even Palme agreed reluctantly that Moscow must be a party to these violations and that their underlying rationale could well be more specific and certainly more purposeful than was originally assumed.

Speculation on the probable military motive behind the Soviet submarine campaign has tended to take one of two forms. There are those who have argued that these operations, while manifestly military in orientation, have been prosecuted primarily for defensive purposes. A second school of thought has argued that they have been initiated to support a range of possible offensive contingency plans against Sweden and the larger Nordic area. Those subscribing to the first view have argued that the Soviets would attempt to use Swedish waters in time of war as a staging area from which to carry out attacks against NATO naval forces operating in the Baltic sea. The Swedish archipelago would be used to hide conventional submarines from NATO surveillance, transit from Soviet Baltic bases to operating areas off the Danish and West German coasts, and even as a deployment area for the Baltic Fleet's aging Golf-class SSBs. Current Soviet operations, in this view, were designed to gain familiarity with Sweden's internal waters, locate possible wartime deployment areas, and test the range and quality of Sweden's ASW defenses. The overriding objective of these activities, however, was not to support some future campaign against

Sweden but to better prepare the Soviet Navy to control the Baltic sea in the event of war.⁸

A second school of thought has argued that the Soviet Union's real interest is in Sweden itself, not as an object of conquest *per se*, but as a factor in Soviet military planning in both the Nordic and Baltic areas. Soviet operations, in this view, are designed to support Soviet war plans against Sweden within the framework of a larger European conflict. Soviet interest in Sweden, it is argued, stems alternatively from a concern that the Swedes would not remain neutral in a future East-West conflict and an interest in using Swedish airspace or even territory as a route to Norway. According to proponents of this view, Soviet peacetime activities in and around Sweden are intelligence and training operations designed to prepare Soviet forces to rapidly defeat a Swedish military mobilization in the event of war. Such activities would include identifying, prioritizing, and monitoring future military targets; familiarizing themselves with Swedish early warning and defense capabilities; charting likely operating areas to facilitate rapid wartime access, and even deploying mines, acoustic sensors, or directional transponders that might be activated on command if necessary. This explanation has the advantage of accounting not only for Soviet submarine incursions, but for the range of Soviet actions on Swedish territory. A variant of this theory was advanced by the Submarine Defense Commission, which at the time it published its report could find no other rationale that was consistent with the evidence.⁹

AN ASSESSMENT OF SOVIET BEHAVIOR

Most of these arguments can be easily dismissed. Most are either partial theories, selective in their use of the evidence, too convoluted to be plausible, or simply inconsistent with events. Many of the ideas presented above were offered in the spirit of suggestion. Others were tabled after the initial wave of submarine incidents during the early 1980s, and their authors may well now hold different views on the likely motives underlying Soviet actions. The situation appears much clearer today. In the wake of nine years of experience, it is possible to identify a pattern in Soviet operations in Sweden.

These operations have clearly been strategically conducted, carried out to support some larger Soviet planning program. It is by now quite evident that Soviet visits to Swedish waters have been specifically

⁸These theories are reviewed in Leitenberg, 1987, pp. 140-143; see also the discussion by Berner, 1985.

⁹Ministry of Defense, 1983, pp. 66-77. See also Agrell, 1983, pp. 272-275.

targeted and well coordinated. Their scope, precision, and operational focus all suggest a guiding hand and cannot be satisfactorily interpreted through piecemeal explanations. The objective of these operations also appears to derive from enduring Soviet interests in Sweden and the Nordic area, rather than from the particular concerns or policies of some individual Soviet regime since 1980. Soviet incursions have been conducted on a regular basis in force during the terms of three Swedish Prime Ministers, four Soviet General Secretaries, and four Commanders of the Soviet Baltic Fleet. The pattern and character of Soviet operations are well established and consistent with the view that they are being conducted to satisfy some broader set of political or military goals.

These incursions have clearly been carried out with the full knowledge and authority of the Soviet civil leadership. Many early observers, most notably the Swedes themselves, were hopeful that Soviet submarine operations were being conducted without the knowledge of the Soviet leadership group or even elements within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This hope provided the basis of early Swedish policy toward the submarine crisis. Over the objections of elements of the political opposition, primarily the Moderate party, which rejected the thesis of Soviet political innocence, the Palme government set about to reveal the nature of Soviet naval interference in Swedish waters in the expectation that once informed, Moscow would rein in the Baltic fleet command. These efforts predictably fell on deaf ears. Although it is unlikely that Soviet operations were politically initiated, they have certainly enjoyed tacit political support. It is evident in retrospect that Soviet leadership circles have long been aware of the extent and nature of their Navy's operations off the Swedish coast. The fact that these operations continue in the face of vocal Swedish opposition also suggests that they support the objective(s) these visits are designed to serve. This, again, has presumably been true of the past three Soviet regimes, from Brezhnev to Chernenko, as well as the current Gorbachev regime, under which Soviet submarine incursions have continued. Although tactical features of these operations have changed with time, their incidence, character, and operational focus have remained fairly constant since 1981, suggesting a continuity of purpose.

In view of the directed nature of Soviet submarine intrusions, there are really only three possible explanations for Soviet behavior: These operations have been conducted (1) to intimidate Sweden into assuming a more sympathetic position with regard to Soviet interests in the Baltic and Nordic regions, (2) to support Soviet military planning against Sweden, or (3) in the hope of achieving both objectives. If

these operations are considered over time, the alternatives can be narrowed still further. Only the military motive can fully account for the scope and specialized character of Soviet actions and the fact that they have worked to the detriment, not to the benefit, of Moscow's political interests in Sweden and elsewhere in Western Europe.

Soviet Operations: The Political Context

Two aspects of the political context within which Soviet submarine operations have been carried out are relevant for this discussion: the degree to which these intrusions run contrary to the basic features of Soviet European public diplomacy over the past decade, and the highly negative reaction they have elicited within Sweden itself since 1981. Since 1979, the Soviets have conducted a concerted image-building campaign in Western Europe. These efforts, which have met with varying degrees of success, have been designed to portray the Soviet Union as a peaceful, cooperative member of the European community whose regional military interests do not extend beyond the legitimate concerns of national defense. By contrast, the United States has been portrayed as reckless, aggressive, insensitive to European concerns, and ready to sacrifice European security in pursuit of its own self-serving goals. This program has developed along two separate but coordinated lines: a "campaign from above" and a "campaign from below."¹⁰ The first, directed at European decisionmaking elites, has involved efforts to sow distrust of U.S. policies, weaken NATO cohesion, and ultimately drive a wedge between the United States and its European allies; the second, a grass roots campaign, has been designed to exploit and exacerbate popular fear of nuclear weapons and the alleged bellicosity of U.S. military policy. Both elements of this program have almost certainly received high-level political attention—at the level of the Politburo or the Defense Council—and have involved the coordinated efforts of the Foreign Ministry, the KGB, the Central Committee, elements of the military, and Soviet-controlled front organizations in Western Europe.

It is impossible to measure the influence Soviet submarine incursions into Swedish (and Norwegian) waters have had on European-wide attitudes toward the Soviet Union.¹¹ These operations have been

¹⁰Alexiev, 1985, pp. 8-36; see also Van Oudenaren, 1986.

¹¹Soviet submarine intrusions, on an apparently smaller and less provocative scale, have been registered in Norwegian fjords since at least 1969. Other incidents, presumed to have been Soviet in origin, have also been reported in Italy, Japan, and at the U.S. naval base at Subic Bay. For a general discussion of these incidents see Leitenberg, 1987, pp. 16-23.

directly at odds with Soviet image-building efforts and have, to some degree or another, jeopardized Moscow's political objectives in Western Europe. The Soviet submarine campaign and the "peace offensive" both took off at approximately the same time. At roughly the time of the Uto incident (1980), Soviet spokesmen were decrying the "aggressive shift" that had occurred in American military policy. In the fall of 1981, immediately before and after the "Whiskey on the Rocks" incident, Soviet commentators were referring to the United States as a country of "aggressors, interventionists, and terrorists" and warning Europeans of the "cannibalistic instincts" of U.S. imperialism.¹² As Soviet violations in Swedish waters increased over the next three years, the peace offensive reached its stride, hammering away at the "militaristic" character of U.S. policies and calling upon Western Europe to enter into a new relationship with Moscow. Soviet operations off the Swedish coast, meanwhile, were being widely reported in the European press, undercutting Moscow's political agenda. This was particularly evident in the case of unusually large or embarrassing incidents such as the U-137 grounding, the Harsfjarden incident, Karlskrona II, or the recent Torefjarden operation, which would receive detailed media coverage for days or weeks at a time. This clearly was not the image the Soviets wished to project. It was inconsistent with the unitary political line being played at the time to European audiences and tended to portray the Soviet Union, not the United States, as the superpower that could be least entrusted with European interests.¹³

The submarine campaign has had a major influence in Sweden, where it has contributed to a radical shift in the public image of the Soviet Union and its likely objectives in the Nordic area. This reaction had become quite evident by 1983. A decade earlier, a poll taken by the Swedish National Psychology Defense Planning Committee indicated that only 15 percent of those questioned believed that the Soviets were "unfriendly to Sweden," while only 4 percent thought that the Soviet Union posed "a direct threat" to Swedish security. Two years after the first Karlskrona incident, public sentiments had changed perceptibly. Of those polled, now 48 percent believed that Moscow was unfriendly, while 37 percent feared that the Soviets had become a clear and present danger to Swedish security. This shift in attitude was matched by a corresponding change in the public's image of the United States. As the popular image of the Soviet Union deteriorated, public attitudes toward U.S. policy improved substantially. These findings

¹²See the commentary in *New Times*, No. 34, September 1981; and the discussion in Alexiev, 1985, pp. 10-13; and Van Oudenaren, 1986, pp. 23-62.

¹³See for example "Wider U-Boot-Suche vor Schweden," *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, July 4, 1987.

were confirmed and updated in a European survey conducted by Sweden's Institute for Market Research in 1987. Of those surveyed 42 percent within Sweden registered a negative reaction to recent Soviet peace and disarmament initiatives. This was by far the largest negative reaction in Europe. The average negative rating in Europe was 18 percent, while France, with the second lowest approval rating, came in at 24 percent. Though there is undoubtedly a range of factors that have influenced this shift in Swedish attitudes, submarines top the list.¹⁴

Public sentiment was further reflected in hardening official views on the issue of national defense, which has resulted in a careful review of Swedish threat assumptions, defensive requirements, and force planning. The Soviet submarine campaign has led to a new awareness among both the Swedish government and the public at large concerning the threat the Soviet Union poses to Swedish security. This has led to renewed suspicion over the Soviet military build-up in the high north, skepticism over Soviet proposals to institute a Nordic nuclear free zone and turn the Baltic into a "sea of peace," and a new determination to improve the country's ability to defend itself in time of war. In 1987, the Swedish parliament approved the first real value increase in defense expenditures in 15 years. Critics have argued that the planned increase is still insufficient to meet Sweden's current requirements; it nevertheless represents a major shift in official attitudes on defense. The new budget allows for a 1.5 percent real annual increase in expenditures over the next five years beginning in FY1988. Most of this increase will be spent on air force and naval procurement and enhanced readiness. Funds have also been allocated for a substantial growth in military intelligence capabilities. This budget, which has been billed as a policy reversal by the Swedish government, is as important symbolically as it is for the country's defense preparedness. It is a graphic example of the change in official and public sentiment that has been brought about by the continuing provocative violation of Sweden's territorial waters.¹⁵

Such an outcome would hardly prove satisfactory if the objectives underlying the Soviet submarine campaign were political in nature. As noted above, the Soviet leadership has had nine years to monitor and assess Swedish reactions to the submarine crisis. The reaction has been unequivocally negative. It has seriously undermined Soviet-Swedish relations, further sensitized Swedish authorities to the Soviet

¹⁴The results of this survey were published in *Dagens Nyheter*, June 1987, p. 8. See also Cole, 1986b, pp. 32-34.

¹⁵This reaction has been building over time. See the discussion by Bacon and Calomiris, 1986; Van Oudenaren, 1986, p. 45.

military threat, exacerbated public fears of Soviet intentions, contributed to a major reversal in the U.S. approval rating, stimulated a broad based debate over Swedish security policy, and led to the first real increase in the country's defense budget since 1972. Although the reaction to the Soviet submarine campaign throughout the rest of Western Europe is less certain, it has definitely not been favorable. One must presume that, at some level, Soviet operations in Sweden, coupled with the frequent violation of Norwegian waters, have undermined Soviet efforts to build a new, more cooperative, peaceloving profile in the European mind. At the very least, they have been a reminder of the "old" Soviet Union and the potentially aggressive character of Soviet policy. If the submarine campaign has been politically motivated, it has failed. Although the costs and risks associated with these operations are not fully apparent, they are certainly at odds with Moscow's political ambitions in West Europe. This, moreover, has been evident for years. Throughout it all, however, Soviet submarine incursions have continued.

Apart from whatever costs the Soviets have incurred to continue to carry out these missions, the regular violation of Swedish inner waters has also entailed very real political risks. The risk the Soviets run, of course, is that one of these days the Swedish government might decide to authorize whatever measures are necessary to destroy a Soviet intruder, a decision that despite Stockholm's claims to the contrary it has been reluctant to make. Alternatively, Swedish naval units could inadvertently destroy or damage an intruder in their efforts to force it out of Swedish waters, a frustrated local commander could decide to take matters into his own hands and move against a localized Soviet submarine without authorization, or, as in 1981, Moscow could have one of its operations exposed deep inside Swedish territorial waters through carelessness, equipment failure, or simple bad luck. Should the Swedes, by accident or design, ever succeed in sinking or capturing a Soviet submarine, the political fallout could be expected to be felt throughout Western Europe. In contrast to "Whiskey on the Rocks," which took place in the early years of the Soviet submarine campaign, such an incident would be interpreted in the context of nine years of violations, eight years of Soviet denials, and Moscow's program to convince all who will listen that there is "new thinking" at the top. Any such exposure would be seriously damaging to Moscow's efforts to project a new image in the minds of European publics.¹⁶

The Soviet civil leadership, which has been in a position to monitor the costs and risks of carrying out these operations since at least 1981,

¹⁶On recent Soviet policy in Europe, see Gelman, 1987.

presumably understands the real and potential political consequences of continuing to send submarines into Swedish waters. These costs and risks have clearly been discounted against the future value of military preparedness in the Nordic area. Moscow's challenge has not been to determine what the Navy is up to off the Swedish coast, or to rein in the Baltic Fleet command. As noted earlier, Soviet leadership circles are not only aware of the nature and extent of these operations, they undoubtedly share the basic objectives the submarine campaign is designed to support. The fact that they have continued to send submarines into Swedish waters for the past nine years suggests that they are also comfortable with their ability to control the course of events. The problem, by contrast, is the simple one of matching ends with means, of ensuring that the submarine campaign remains tied to and constrained by the larger priorities of Soviet political and military planning. The current and expected political costs of continuing to conduct these operations must not be allowed to outweigh their expected military return. The game, evidently, is still worth the political candle.

Soviet Interests in the North

The submarine campaign and related Soviet operations ashore can be satisfactorily interpreted only within the context of Soviet military interests and likely wartime goals in Scandinavia and the Baltic area. These interests and objectives stem from the region's central and hence pivotal location between the Arctic and Western theaters of strategic military action, the growing importance of northern-based assets in Soviet strategic nuclear planning, and recent Soviet interest in the prospect of establishing a conventional warfighting option in Western Europe. Soviet assessments of the military challenges they face in the north and the consequent role of peacetime operations for wartime readiness, appear to be directly tied to these and related considerations.

Perhaps the most dramatic development over the past decade and a half has been the increased role Kola-based assets have come to play in Soviet nuclear planning. The importance of the high north, notably the regions of Finmark and the Norwegian North Cape, has grown accordingly. The Kola peninsula has become the principal basing area for the Soviet fleet ballistic missile force. At the present time, approximately 66 percent of the Soviet SSBN force operates out of Kola bases. This represents roughly 20 percent of the total Soviet strategic arsenal and over 65 percent of the country's estimated secure reserve force. As of fall 1989, the northern fleet has received all the Soviet Navy's most advanced SSBNs, the Typhoon and the Delta IV. The larger warhead loadouts of these platforms have enhanced the importance of the

northern-based SSBN force still further, providing it with some 75 percent of the Navy's SLBM warhead inventory and 73 percent of its equivalent megatonnage (EMT). When these estimates are added to the percentage of the strategic bomber force that is believed to depend on local basing facilities in time of war, the Kola peninsula may account for as much as 28 percent of the Soviet Union's strategic launch platforms, 21 percent of its total warhead inventory, and almost 16 percent of its deliverable EMT.¹⁷ The figures, coupled with the critical strategic reserve mission performed by the northern fleet, indicate the region's importance for both Soviet nuclear deterrence and offensive operations.

The region is similarly important in Soviet defensive calculations. The Kola, and the adjacent coastal region between the White Sea and the Urals, serve as one of the Soviet Union's central forward air defense zones. Air defense assets based in the area of the Kola peninsula are ideally situated to intercept U.S. bombers transiting the pole and air and sea launched cruise missiles launched from the region of the Barents Sea. Regionally based radar installations also play a central role in Soviet early warning efforts, not only against the air-breathing threat, but against the U.S. ICBM force. A large percentage of any U.S. strike launched against the Soviet Union would pass over or near the Kola area. The Arkhangelsk Air Defense Sector, which incorporates the Kola peninsula, accounts for approximately 20 percent of all interceptors, 46 percent of the Soviets' airborne early warning assets, 40 percent of the Soviets' early warning radar, and as much as 35 percent of their target acquisition radars. Apart from their strategic defensive mission, these assets would play a key role in providing air support for northern fleet elements operating in and around the Barents and north Norwegian Seas. They would be critical to Soviet efforts to establish control over the Barents and surrounding waters and with the aid of locally based elements of Soviet long-range naval aviation would play a central role in contesting NATO control over northern Norway and the greater Norwegian Sea. Norway's proximity to the Kola peninsula, and the importance Norwegian air bases hold in allied planning, have made this mission an important one.¹⁸

The Soviets have similarly strong interests in the southern Nordic area and Baltic Sea, an area encompassing southern Norway, the Danish straits, the western Baltic Approaches, and the south coast of Sweden. At a minimum, control over the waters of the western Baltic, including the Danish island of Bornholm, would be essential for

¹⁷Reis and Skorve, 1987, pp. 6-40; Cole, 1986; Weinland, 1985.

¹⁸Ries and Skorve, 1987, p. 33; Lund, 1989, pp. 33-39. See also the discussion by Erickson, 1976.

protecting the northern flank of Warsaw Pact forces advancing through Germany toward Schleswig-Holstein. Effective command of this area would also permit the Soviets to conduct landing operations along the German coast and serve as a precondition for seizing the Jutland peninsula and the Danish straits. As a maximum objective, Soviet planners undoubtedly hope to establish command over the straits and surrounding Danish and Norwegian territory. Such a move, if successful, would drive a wedge between NATO's central and northern commands, isolating Norway, exposing NATO airfields in southern Norway to attack, and opening up the prospect of a Warsaw Pact envelopment operation against Central Europe. At the very least, a Soviet move into Jutland and Zealand would sever NATO's air and sea access to the Baltic, permit the wartime deployment of Soviet submarines into the North Sea, directly threaten NATO access to North Sea ports, and dangerously complicate NATO blocking operations on the Central Front. Although any major operation against Denmark would be an ambitious undertaking to be sure, it could provide "the keystone to a successful and short Soviet conventional war in Europe."¹⁹

The question of Baltic control has become additionally important to Soviet military planners in the wake of the Polish unrest of the early 1980s. Lying as it does on the road to the Central Front, Poland would occupy a critical position in any future conflict in Europe. Poland's role in such a war, however, and even its utility as a reliable transit zone for Soviet forces and supplies moving west, may well have been called into question by the events of 1980-1981, the questionable reliability of the Polish armed forces, and continuing levels of popular ferment. Wartime control over the western Baltic in these circumstances is a critical Soviet objective. Apart from the opportunity costs of not being able to use the Baltic Sea as an avenue to attack Denmark, Baltic Sea lines of communication (SLOCs) would be an important hedge against any logistical disruptions the Soviets might face on Polish territory. Ready access to Baltic SLOCs would, if necessary, permit the Soviets to bypass Poland and support any offensive on the north Central Front through East German ports. Though not a perfect substitute for unimpeded access through Poland, the absence of such an alternative in the face of either the disruption or enemy interdiction of the Polish road and rail system could seriously jeopardize Soviet offensive operations against Germany. Even if the Soviets remain confident in their ability to contain any resistance they might face in Poland, the use of Baltic SLOCs would be an important complement to a heavily

¹⁹See the discussion by Jordan, 1987, pp. 1373-1374, 1376; Ministry of Defense, 1985; Polmar, 1987, pp. 137-139; Donnelly and Petersen, 1976, pp. 1047-1051.

taxed overland supply system. Apart from whatever problems the Soviets might face in Poland, this will require the Soviet Navy to gain early command over the western and southern Baltic areas.

These objectives, like those in the high north, are critical to a favorable Soviet war outcome. Failure to control both northern Norway and the western Baltic Sea could seriously endanger Soviet war plans in any future war in Europe, severely restricting Soviet military options, providing an avenue of attack against homeland bases, threatening the secure reserve force, and opening up the possibility of allied flanking operations against Soviet lines of reinforcement and supply in central Europe. Although these considerations have always been sources of concern for Soviet military planners, they have become more rather than less important over the past ten years because of recent changes in U.S. maritime planning in the north and increased Soviet interest in building a conventional warfighting option in Europe.

The growing importance of the north in Soviet military planning has led to a corresponding increase in Western interest in the region, stemming both from the area's growing importance in Soviet nuclear posture as well as the role Soviet Kola-based assets would play in a general conventional war. American concern for the military importance of the high north has been enshrined in the doctrine of the Forward Maritime Strategy, which, in time of war, would call upon Western naval and marine forces to establish a commanding position in the Norwegian Sea, north Norway, and the cape to contain Soviet naval and air movements, search out and destroy the Soviet SSBN force, and establish a secure area of operations from which to strike the Kola peninsula. These developments have resulted in a discernible increase in allied exercises in northern waters over the past decade and a considerable expansion in the assets designated to be sent to the north in a crisis, further spurring Soviet regional initiatives.²⁰

Soviet and allied military plans for the high north have assumed their own dynamic. As Soviet interests and capabilities in the region have grown, so too have Western concerns. These have led to a forward strategy to combat Soviet forces operating from northern bases with the outset of hostilities, a move that has almost certainly led to a further expansion in local Soviet capabilities. As a consequence of these developments, the area is certain to figure prominently in any future conflict. Victory in the north will go to the side that is able to control northern Norway and ready access to the Norwegian Sea. These two objectives will be mutually supporting. For the Soviets, command of the cape or, at minimum, denying the allies access to

²⁰See Heginbotham, 1985; and Brooks, 1986.

northern airfields, will permit Soviet air and naval forces to operate freely and in strength against Western naval elements in the Norwegian Sea. Similarly, operations against NATO naval forces, particularly U.S. carrier battle groups deployed north of the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom (GIUK) gap, are likely to severely limit NATO's ability to defend and hold northern Norway successfully. For its part, NATO must reinforce the north cape region at the outset of war if it is to have any chance of gaining command over the greater Norwegian Sea. Having accomplished these objectives, the allies would prove difficult to dislodge and key Soviet interests would be at risk. With this in mind, it is easy to imagine that a future conflict in Europe could well open with a race to control north Norway.

The importance of both the northern and southern Nordic peninsula has been reinforced by the growing conventional orientation of Soviet theater planning. The recent increase in Soviet interest in the prospect of fighting and winning a nonnuclear war in Europe has, by now, been well documented.²¹ What began in the mid- to late 1960s as an investigation into the possibility of waging an initial conventional phase in a future nuclear conflict had grown by the late 1970s into an interest in finding ways to avoid or preempt the resort to nuclear weapons altogether. Soviet doctrinal writings on this subject are well established and have been matched by a series of key changes in the Soviet wartime command structure, force structure and organization, military logistics, and training and exercise patterns suggesting that Soviet planners are giving teeth to their newly developed concepts of conventional war. These developments need not concern us here. The new demands this shift in doctrine has made on Soviet strategic and operational planning are important however. Conventional solutions had to be found for performing critical wartime tasks that were once to be solved by preemptive nuclear release.

The search for such solutions has led to a renewed Soviet interest in speed, the initial period of operations, the importance of geographical position, and the need to plan for the possibility of a long war, according a new prominence to the larger Nordic area. A Soviet Scandinavian offensive, which within the context of a nuclear duel in central Europe would be a relative sideshow, would be likely to assume an important place in a Soviet conventional campaign. The success of such a campaign, in the Soviet view, would turn not only on the velocity and discrimination of the initial attack, but on rapidly gaining certain key territorial objectives, designed to place the enemy on the

²¹See for example, Petersen and Hines, 1983; and Roberts, 1984. Also useful is Fitzgerald, 1986.

immediate strategic defensive, threaten his lines of communication and reinforcement, preclude his resort to nuclear weapons, and provide one's own forces with the opportunity to maintain the battlefield initiative. Achieving these objectives might not only force an early enemy defeat but would provide a hedge against the possibility of protracted war, placing Soviet forces in a superior position to carry on the fight. The early seizure of the Danish straits, northern and southern Norwegian airfields, and the north cape would go a long way toward satisfying these goals, permitting Soviet air forces to operate freely over the Norwegian and North Seas, providing a new axis of advance against the Central Front, and directly threatening European logistical links with the United States, in both the North Sea and North Atlantic.

SWEDEN IN SOVIET WAR PLANS

The final piece of the submarine puzzle concerns the role Sweden is likely to play in Soviet war planning. Specifically, has Sweden been incorporated into Soviet contingency plans for Europe? In what circumstances would Sweden be attacked? What would be the objectives of such an attack? And how would a Soviet campaign against Sweden be conducted? The answers to these questions hinge on the degree to which such an operation could be expected to support Moscow's larger military ambitions in the north, Soviet views of Swedish neutrality, and the constraints and pressures that would be likely to inform Soviet crisis decisionmaking.

Opportunity, Risk, and Timing

As one assessment of Soviet planning toward the high north has noted, "there are no moral reasons which would impel the Russians to respect Swedish neutrality, only practical ones."²² With this in mind, it is easy to imagine that Sweden would be targeted in a future war in Europe and certain that it has been brought into contingent Soviet war plans. First, Sweden lies on the road to Norway. Any future Soviet offensive against Norway and, to a lesser degree, Denmark would be facilitated greatly by the use of Swedish territory and airspace. If Norway holds the critical role in Soviet strategy that I have suggested, then Sweden, by association, is likely to also figure prominently in Soviet thinking. Soviet planners must know that a quick decision in Norway requires first gaining transit options through or over Sweden.

²²Donnelly et al., 1984, p. 153.

Even the minimum objectives of securing the north cape and suppressing NATO air operations in northern and southern Norway would be seriously complicated by the need to circumvent Swedish airspace.²³

Even in the unlikely event that the Soviets were not to attempt to seize portions of Norway, access to Swedish airspace would probably be essential if they ever planned to mount a serious air campaign against allied forces operating in and around the Norwegian Sea and the North Atlantic SLOC. Swedish overflight would not only greatly increase the effective range (or payload) of the Soviet air threat, it would permit the Soviets to circumvent the air defense gauntlet of north Norway. Should NATO succeed in reinforcing northern Norway before a Soviet attack, the north cape could be turned into a major barrier to any Soviet air or surface naval campaign launched from the Kola against the south until the Soviets succeeded in destroying or seizing Norway's five principal northern based airfields, a costly and time consuming task if possible at all, or instead attempted to avoid the north cape altogether by opening up an air corridor through Sweden. Ultimately, of course, it is not a question of choosing among ideal alternatives, but of making the best of one's opportunities and constraints to realize the mission objective. It is likely, therefore, that the Soviets would attempt to both seize the north cape quickly and gain access rights to Swedish airspace. Achieving one of these objectives would serve as a hedge against failure to achieve the other. The growing importance of the north in both Soviet and NATO war plans is likely to justify the effort and the insurance.

Soviet incentives to move against Sweden at the outset of a future European conflict appear to be reinforced by an abiding suspicion of the country's neutrality and claims to nonalignment. The question in the Soviet mind is, "How neutral is a neutral Sweden?" It has been argued that the Soviets would be content to see Sweden sit out the next war as a nonaligned bystander, defending its neutrality against all who would attempt to employ Swedish airspace or territory for military advantage. Although the Soviets, under these circumstances, would not be able to exploit Sweden's central location, neither would the West, which would be similarly hindered from crossing Swedish airspace to attack Soviet territory. Sweden, the argument goes, would serve as a passive barrier in defense of the Soviet Union's northern and Baltic flanks.²⁴ On the face of it, this may seem like an acceptable compromise. It assumes, however, that the Soviets would be willing to take the Swedes at their word and trust the success of their northern

²³Huitfeldt, 1986.

²⁴Donnelly et al., 1984, pp. 153-157.

and western Baltic Sea campaigns to Swedish discretion. That is most unlikely. Moscow may be willing to acknowledge (if not accommodate) Sweden's neutrality in peacetime, but it could never permit critical wartime objectives to turn on Swedish forbearance. Although Sweden's stated policy is one of nonalignment, Swedish sympathies and security interests lie with the West. That may not be the public view of the Swedish government, but it is certainly the perspective of the Soviet planner, who sees the Swedes differently than they see themselves and who is tasked with the job of anticipating the worst.²⁵

Any Swedish intervention in a future European conflict would have serious implications for Soviet war objectives, particularly within the context of a conventional conflict. As an armed neutral, Sweden serves as an obstacle but not a threat to Soviet planning. Any scenario in which Sweden casts its lot with the West would pose a direct threat to Soviet operations in both the high north and Baltic Sea area. Sweden's position astride the Arctic and Western TVDs would provide it with the opportunity to outflank the Soviet Baltic SLOC, derail any offensive launched against Denmark and the western Baltic, and help disrupt any move the Soviets might make to occupy parts of northern Norway. It would also provide NATO with an additional avenue to carry out direct attacks against the Soviet Union. Soviet vulnerability to Swedish intervention would tend to grow rather than diminish during the initial days or weeks of a future conflict. Having once committed themselves and most of their readily available assets to a northern and Baltic offensive, the Soviets will have effectively placed the success of their Nordic campaign in Swedish hands. Among other things, victory would hinge on Sweden's continued willingness to remain both unaligned and uninvolved. Whether Sweden, with or without NATO collaboration, would actually succeed in defeating a Soviet advance across north Norway and the Baltic is less important than that Sweden could certainly deny the Soviets the opportunity to achieve their objectives in a timely manner. This alone makes Sweden an important factor in Soviet planning in the north.²⁶

Sweden, in short, is a rogue variable in Soviet war planning. The choice facing the Soviets is either to solve the Swedish problem unilaterally through military means, or to carry out a Nordic campaign under the continuing risk of a Swedish intervention. This decision problem is complicated by the fact that Moscow would be forced to choose a course of action before Sweden has shown its hand. The only real opportunity the Soviets would have to defeat Sweden quickly is

²⁵Jervas, 1986, pp. 16-25.

²⁶Stefenson, 1987.

likely to come before or with the outbreak of general war. Specifically, such an attack must be carried out before Sweden is able to mobilize. It would be particularly important that the Soviets succeed in stopping or disrupting a Navy and Air Force mobilization. These forces pose the greatest threat to Soviet planning and will be the quickest to complete the mobilization process. Alerted and dispersed, the Navy and the Air Force will be quite difficult to neutralize without a major military investment, a price the Soviets would undoubtedly prefer not to pay. Soviet planners would have powerful incentives to strike Sweden immediately in any future war in Europe if they (1) intended to use Swedish territory or airspace to attack Norway and allied forces operating in the Norwegian Sea, and (2) hoped to preempt the risk that Sweden might decide to go over to the allies at a critical juncture in the conflict.²⁷

Such an offensive would be dictated by Sweden's central position in the north and is likely to be carried out regardless of any claims that might be made to a policy of independence, neutrality, and nonalignment. Precedent for this view can be found in Soviet General Staff plans for an attack on Sweden and the Nordic peninsula at the end of World War II. The foundations for Soviet wartime planning were reportedly laid in the early 1920s and subsequently updated in 1941 with the end of the Winter War and the improved position afforded by the gain of the Baltic States. The general plan called for a coordinated move into northern Norway, a multi-pronged offensive across central and southern Finland, and a sea-based attack against southern Sweden ending in a drive for south Norway (see Fig. 3). The invasion of Sweden was to be launched from the ports of Kronstadt-Leningrad, Tallin, Vyborg, Riga, Lepaya, and Ventpils to the areas of Malmo, Norrkoping, Stockholm, Gavle, and Harnosand. The attack would depend heavily on surprise, achieved in this case by masking the time and place of attack and the nature of the objective. Soviet forces would sail at night and strike selected ports the following day. Then as now, the Soviets would depend upon augmenting their scarce amphibious assets with commercial shipping, forcing them to seize Swedish harbor facilities intact. The occupation of southern Sweden was thereafter expected to progress quickly. Stockholm and Oslo were both expected to fall to Soviet forces within two weeks.²⁸

²⁷For a good discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the Swedish defense system see Canby, 1981, pp. 116-123; Hellman, 1977, pp. 79-86; Andren, 1973.

²⁸The details of this plan were gathered from former Soviet officers captured by the Germans in World War II. For a fuller discussion, see McQuail, 1964, pp. 7-16, which provides a detailed picture of the Soviet invasion plan and some implications for NATO strategy.

The would-be objectives of this venture looked very similar to the ones that would underlie a Soviet move into the Nordic peninsula today. Soviet strategic goals on the peninsula were largely intermediate. A strong foothold in Norway and Sweden would secure the positions of the Northern and Baltic fleets, open the way for Soviet air attacks against German territory, and threaten a "fourth front" against the German army. Over the long run, of course, such a foothold would also greatly enhance Moscow's political leverage and strategic position in any postwar order. We can only speculate on whether the Soviets would have actually carried out their plans against Scandinavia if given the opportunity. Any attack against Sweden, a proclaimed neutral, would have seriously damaged Soviet relations with the allies, a price Moscow was not yet prepared to pay. The fact remains, however, that the Soviets gave serious thought to the possibility of invading Sweden as part of a general offensive in the north. Soviet concerns were for violating not Swedish neutrality but the terms of their still necessary alliance with the western allies. The issue, then as now, was defined in practical terms. Such a plan would have been carried out if it were useful and feasible to do so. Sweden's status as a nonbelligerent would not have stood in the way had an invasion of the country served Soviet war aims.

Special Operations and Soviet Planning

Soviet submarine incursions and related operations ashore can be fully interpreted only within the context of such a scenario. Apart from the fact that these operations have proved to be a political liability, their character and apparent objectives all point to a military motive. The question is what kind of threat to Sweden do these incursions represent? An evaluation of Soviet requirements, the strengths and weaknesses of the Swedish defense system, and the nature of ongoing Soviet operations indicate that the problem is quite different from the one that the Swedes may have faced at the end of World War II. The threat then was from a possible conventional attack, first by the Germans and only later by the Soviet Union. By contrast, the threat today appears to be increasingly unconventional. It is an "insider threat," designed to attack Sweden's defense posture from within. Although such an offensive would probably be the opening gambit of a larger military and political campaign against Sweden, the success or failure of this effort, and by implication the success of the larger Soviet Nordic campaign, would turn on the outcome of these initial operations. The objective of these operations would be to cripple Sweden's ability to effectively respond to a Soviet external challenge, opening the



SOURCE: Col. Robert P. McQuail, "Khrushchev's Right Flank," *Military Review*, January 1964, p. 13.

Fig. 3—Soviet operational plans against Sweden in World War II

way for an accommodation that would permit Soviet forces to transit Swedish territory and airspace as part of a campaign against Norway.

This view has increasingly influenced Swedish threat perceptions. With the growth of Soviet special operations, Swedish planners have gradually revised their traditional view of what an attack "from the east" would look like. Historically, Swedish defense planning has assumed first that any future attack on Sweden would be preceded by a lengthy warning period, giving the armed forces an opportunity to carry out a nationwide mobilization. Second, the Swedes believed that the threat would be a conventional one and come from the southern and central Baltic Sea. Sweden's response would be based on a strategy of peripheral defense and the view that "if the country cannot be kept out of war, then war must be kept out of the country."²⁹ The Royal Navy and Air Force would engage and sink the invasion fleet before it was able to land on Swedish soil. Finally, the Swedes assumed that an attack would be carried out only within the context of a general conflict. Swedish defense posture, therefore, was predicated against a "marginal threat." In this view, Sweden need not be able to stand up to the full brunt of the Soviet Army, only residual elements of it. This belief fostered the hope that Sweden would never be attacked at all, even in the course of a war in Europe. Resource limitations and the competing demands of a Central Front campaign would force the Soviets to respect Swedish claims to neutrality.³⁰

Soviet operations on and off Swedish territory have led many observers to question these assumptions. Analysts and defense authorities alike have grown uncomfortable with the assumption that the first time they will encounter the enemy will be somewhere out in the Baltic. Opinion is still divided, but a growing number of analysts and commentators have concluded that the initial meeting at least will come within Sweden itself. The first threat Sweden will be forced to contend with will be from agents in place now living among the Swedish population and special forces that will be inserted by the Soviets on the eve of war.³¹ All of this has shaken the assumption that Sweden will be permitted to mobilize before an attack. There is general agreement that the first objective of such an attack would be critical elements of the decisionmaking and alert system, Sweden's command and control structure, and key assets and personnel within the armed services, notably the Air Force and Navy. Although an operation of this

²⁹Roberts, 1976, pp. 94, 84-123.

³⁰Ministry of Defense, 1965, pp. 53-60; Hagard, 1967, pp. 33-35; Roberts, 1976, p. 91.

³¹The literature on the role of special operations in Soviet planning is sparse. For background, see Donnelly, 1960; Kohler, 1967; Berkowits, 1968; Suvorov, 1963; and Dziak, 1963.

nature would not fully derail a general mobilization, it could destroy Sweden's ability to effectively counter a follow-on attack.³²

This scenario is consistent with the types of operations currently being conducted on and off the Swedish coast. An attack of this nature would depend upon surprise, speed, and discrimination. The success of such a campaign, therefore, would hinge critically on accurate intelligence. Vulnerabilities in the Swedish mobilization system, weaknesses in Sweden's command and control apparatus, the location, routines, and wartime roles of key personnel within the country's larger security establishment, and critical military and political targets, would have to be identified and prioritized well in advance of the opening engagement. Information of this nature could be collected over time only by means of a comprehensive, nationally based intelligence collection program, which would have to be conducted on an ongoing basis to ensure that the campaign plan remained consistent with developments within Sweden's defense system. Ideally, these efforts would be carried out by the same personnel that would be assigned to execute the plan in time of war. If true, the Soviet collection program and recent Swedish efforts to reduce their vulnerability to unconventional attack are self-reinforcing. The harder the Swedes work to address current vulnerabilities, the more determined the Soviets must become to monitor these changes and find ways to circumvent them. The dynamic character of Soviet intelligence requirements explains the continuity in Soviet submarine operations over the course of the past eight years.³³

An unconventional offensive, no matter how carefully prepared, is not likely to bring Sweden to its knees in and of itself. It would not have to. The success of such a campaign would be measured by the influence it would have over Sweden's ability to defend itself against subsequent Soviet action. An unconventional attack against Sweden would probably be carried out in an effort to blackmail the country into granting limited access rights to Soviet forces and materiel destined for Norway. In considering this possibility, Soviet planners undoubtedly look to the precedent established in 1941 when, bowing to German pressure, Stockholm permitted German forces to transit Swedish territory from Norway to Finland. Sweden justified this compromise to its neutrality with the view that what the Germans were not given they could take by force. Provoking Germany into attacking Sweden would not stop them from using Swedish territory and might subject the country to a lengthy and painful occupation. This

³²Roberts, 1976, pp. 111-114. Such a scenario has been widely aired in the Swedish press; see for example *Dagens Nyheter*, July 24, 1967; and February 9, 1967.

³³*Svenska Dagbladet*, January 23, 1966.

compromise was compounded when Stockholm was forced to pledge that, if necessary, it would use force to defend its neutrality "against those [the allied powers] who were fighting on the side of Sweden's long term interests." Swedish policy, as one commentator has put it, sought to avoid "the extremes of inflexible neutrality and total subjugation as the former could have led to the latter." The Soviets may well hope to benefit from an analogous compromise in some future conflict in Europe.³⁴

Sweden is arguably more vulnerable to such a compromise today than it was in 1941. This would certainly be true if the Soviets succeeded in first paralyzing the country's mobilization system, leaving Swedish decisionmakers with the option of either caving in to a set of limited demands or suffering the consequences of Soviet retribution. Although the subject is not often discussed openly, Swedish defense authorities have long been concerned with the problems posed by the threat of reprisals. The majority of the Swedish population is located in four principal urban concentrations: Stockholm, the Ostergotland area, the Goteborg area, and western Skane. The country's limited number of population centers has made it vulnerable to a range of counter-urban operations, including conventional attack, the destruction or disruption of civil services, the disruption of urban supply sources, and even the death or capture of selected classes or groups of personnel.³⁵ As Adam Roberts has noted, if electricity were cut off in Stockholm on a typical winter day (-20° C.), the situation would soon become unbearable; thousands would quickly be at risk without a shot being fired. The highly centralized and integrated nature of Sweden's urban services sector, from the power grid system to telecommunications, has made this and related contingencies a source of real concern for Swedish planners. Although Stockholm's reaction to the threat of reprisals cannot be predicted before the fact, such threats would be difficult to resist and deter in the absence of some comparable means of retaliation, much less an effective defense. The Swedish leadership, under these circumstances, could well feel that they "had everything to lose by fighting and little to gain."³⁶

Sweden, in short, is likely to confront an ambiguous threat. The choice, if they are ever to face it, is not likely to be between preemptive

³⁴This agreement allowed German forces to transit Sweden in sealed trains. See the discussion by Cole, 1986b, pp. 20-21.

³⁵See the discussion by Roberts, 1976, pp. 111-113.

³⁶Roberts, 1976, p. 112. Cole, 1986b, notes that on December 27, 1983 there was a short in a single transformer in the city of Enkoping in central Sweden, caused by the failure of a support strut, allowing an electrical line to fall to the ground. The resulting blackout affected most of Sweden as well as parts of Norway and Denmark.

surrender and defense, but between a hopeless defense and limited accommodation. Soviet activities in Sweden appear to be directed at further clarifying this distinction should the time come to present it. Stockholm's response is likely to be as important to the Soviets as it is to the Swedes themselves. If Soviet planners hope to employ Swedish territory or airspace as an avenue to Norway and the Norwegian Sea they will require Swedish acquiescence. Fighting their way through Sweden is simply not an option. Although it could presumably be accomplished with enough resources, the Soviets are likely to have neither the resources nor the time to do so. Even if they were to embark on such an adventure they would risk arriving at the Norwegian border exhausted and out of luck, facing the prospect of confronting a ready and reinforced defense. This prospect would probably deter Moscow from making such a move at all. The challenge for the Soviets, therefore, is to give Stockholm the incentive to allow their forces to make limited use of Swedish territory, which is best accomplished by restricting the country's defense options, threatening the prospect of follow-on reprisals if Stockholm does not accede to Soviet demands within a designated time frame, and providing Sweden with the option of saving itself with a policy of accommodation.

In the end, of course, how the Soviets would attempt to deal with their Swedish problem in a future war in Europe is a matter of speculation. It will also certainly be a matter of circumstance. Soviet operations will be shaped by a broad range of factors, including the nature of the conflict, the manner in which it was initiated, the duration of the crisis period preceding the war, and the manner in and degree to which this time was used by the various protagonists to prepare for impending hostilities.³⁷ They will also be influenced by the Swedes themselves. Whether the possibilities outlined above prove to be realistic on the eve of war will be determined, in part, by Sweden's reaction to ongoing Soviet intelligence efforts. As suggested earlier, special operations are intelligence driven. All things being equal, the less that is known about a target before an attack, the less likely the operation will achieve its intended objective. This will naturally also affect an antagonist's confidence and possibly his willingness to carry out such an attack in the first place. Swedish efforts to bolster their ability to defend against the insider threat could have a similar effect. Given past Soviet attempts to counter such developments by redirecting their collection program, however, these efforts will be best pursued in association with a campaign to bring Soviet operations to a halt. Together, they could influence Soviet cost and risk calculations, making a move against Sweden less attractive than it might otherwise be.

³⁷Lellenberg, 1985, pp. 61-65.

Whether, how, and when the Soviets would attack Sweden in a future war in Europe, therefore, is impossible to predict. Two points, however, can be made with confidence. First, the Soviets have brought Sweden into their wartime contingency plans, probably the result of both a longstanding suspicion of Swedish declarations of neutrality and the growing importance of the Nordic peninsula in Soviet military planning. Second, the nature of clandestine operations points to a general interest in the country's mobilization system and a specific interest in the Swedish Air Force and Navy. Soviet intelligence efforts have been specifically targeted to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of Sweden's warning and alert system, the mobilization system, and the nature of the opposition that might be expected in the event of war. On the basis of this, a great deal of attention appears to have been given to identifying a list of wartime military and political targets. What the Soviets will do with this information is a matter of debate. Based on an evaluation of Soviet military interests in the north, the nature of the Swedish defense system, and the timing constraints that are likely to face Soviet planners on the eve of war, however, Moscow would probably consider the option of striking Sweden at the outset of a future European conflict. The risks of doing so are currently low, and the potential military payoffs must be judged to be high.

IV. SOVIET AND SWEDISH DECISIONMAKING

THE THESIS OF MILITARY AUTONOMY

The submarine crisis has, from the beginning, been wrapped up in interpretations of the larger issue of Soviet civil-military relations. Early Swedish views on the crisis were based on the assumption that the Soviet civil leadership could not possibly be aware of the nature and extent of the Navy's operations off Sweden's coast. This interpretation was based more on the hope that nothing had really changed in Soviet-Swedish relations than on any special insights into the Soviet decisionmaking process or the structure of the Soviet command system. It also satisfied Stockholm's wish to bring these incidents to a rapid and favorable conclusion. To put an end to the submarine incursions, one had only to make the Soviet civil leadership aware of what was going on. On the basis of this assumption, Sweden first began to publicize the fact that "alien intruders" were known to be penetrating Swedish waters and later sought to take their case directly to the Soviet leadership, making use of both diplomatic and informal channels. The expectation among many Swedish officials was that Soviet incursions would soon trail off and pass.¹

¹This expectation was reinforced by the grounding of U-137 in 1981. If the Soviet leadership was previously unaware of the nature of the Navy's operations and unwilling to investigate Swedish complaints, they were aware now and would surely move to do something about it. The incident was a first class embarrassment, made worse by the contradictory and ludicrous excuses that were offered to explain what the submarine had been doing outside a restricted Swedish naval base. The fact that the boat's commander, Captain Gushchin, was court martialed and sent to a labor camp was interpreted by those already inclined toward wishful thinking as confirmation of this view. Even in 1981, many questioned this conclusion. Though Gushchin had indeed been disciplined, it was quite possible that he had been charged not for exceeding his instructions but for permitting himself to be caught in the process of carrying them out. Failure, rather than disobedience, it was argued, had been his undoing.

This view was neither popular nor widely subscribed to at the time. Today, however, it is supported not only by the course of events but by the subsequent career of the then Commander-in-Chief of the Baltic Fleet Admiral I. M. Kapitanets. Had Kapitanets been responsible for this embarrassment by authorizing these missions on his own authority, one would have expected him to suffer a similar fate. He did not. Not only was he not relieved of command, he served as commander of the Baltic Fleet until 1985, when he was promoted to Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Fleet, the senior fleet command in the Soviet Navy. In 1984 he was also made a deputy to the Supreme Soviet, and in 1986 he served as a delegate to the 27th Party Congress. He has been an alternate member of the Central Committee since 1986, and in May 1988 he was promoted to serve as a First Deputy Commander of the Soviet Navy. Similar success has befallen the career of his successor, Admiral K. V. Makarov, who presided over the Baltic Fleet between 1985 and 1986. Makarov has since gone on to become Navy Chief of Staff and,

As time went on and the rate of Soviet operations increased, it became harder and harder to justify this interpretation and conclusion. Soviet civil leadership was clearly cognizant of what was going on, and yet Soviet submarine violations had not only continued, the annual number of incidents between 1981 and 1982 had actually grown. They were also becoming more provocative. For many within the Swedish government, the answer to this quandary was to be found in the gradual decline of the Brezhnev regime. Rather than revise their assumptions concerning the state of Swedish-Soviet relations, most decision-makers chose to modify their views on the state of relations between the Soviet civil and military leaderships. What was at issue now was not whether the Kremlin was aware of the Navy's activities, but whether it was in a position to bring the Navy to heel. Once again, this view was as much an excuse not to move to end these incidents as it was an attempt to explain the disturbing nature of Soviet behavior. There were also those who disagreed. The opposition was widely split between those who suspected that the entire problem had been blown out of proportion, and those who argued that the Soviet leadership was not only aware of these activities but was behind them. The thesis of civil-military complicity was still a minority view and would be until April 1983 when the Submarine Defense Commission published its findings on the issue.

The belief that somehow the Soviet civil leadership could not be responsible for the activities of its submarines off the Swedish coast refused to die.² In retrospect, it began once again to gain adherents with the protracted transition process that followed Brezhnev's death. Although the rapid changes that took place in the Soviet leadership between November 1982 and March 1985 could not be predicted, the passing of Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko within the space of two and a half years gave renewed vigor to those attempting to argue that the Soviet civil leadership was still too weak or in need of the military's support in a period of transition to enforce its will. According to proponents of this view, the leadership could be expected to

like Kapitaneta, one of the two First Deputies Commander of the Soviet Navy. He too served as a delegate to the 27th Party Congress. As these examples suggest, command of the Baltic Fleet has served as an important stepping stone to advancement since 1981.

²See Anders Mellbourn's four part series in *Dagens Nyheter* between March 6-9, 1988. According to his report, the view that "the Soviet military alone was behind the violations and that political decisionmakers in Moscow were unaware of the nature of these activities was widespread." This view influenced the wording of Sweden's second protest note, which was "drafted in such a way that the Soviet leadership was given an opportunity to deny its own involvement, but admit at the same time that the intruding submarines were from the Soviet Union." This is found in Part 1, *Dagens Nyheter*, March 6, 1988.

eventually address the submarine question once it had finally consolidated its position and was able to consider the issue on its political merits, fostering a wait-and-see attitude within Swedish decisionmaking circles. The demise of each subsequent General Secretary bolstered this hope. Although Stockholm, had by now begun to try to influence Soviet submarine policy on its own, many still believed that the problem would eventually resolve itself. This plus the widespread fear that Sweden could not afford to alienate Moscow or risk compromising its neutrality stood as a barrier to instituting an effective response.

This assessment of the state of Soviet civil-military relations managed to survive into the first years of the Gorbachev regime. Here at last, it seemed, was a leader who was both willing and able to solve Sweden's problem. Gorbachev appeared to move quickly to consolidate his position within the Soviet hierarchy. His relative youth and apparent authority suggested he would not be another transitional leader, while his message of *perestroika* and *glasnost* suggested a turn toward internal reform and a reorientation of the Soviet Union's traditional external priorities. Among other things, Gorbachev appeared to work rapidly to bring the Soviet foreign and military apparatus under his authority, a result of the bloc retirement of many old Brezhnevites and several forced personnel changes. Within his first year in office, Gorbachev was able to replace the majority of the Politburo, the Defense Council, and the Council of Ministers. A wide ranging set of changes were also enacted within the military leadership, which, in the words of one colleague, "sustained a more intensive command shakeup than at any previous time since the 1950s." Many of these new appointments were routine, but others were unmistakably tied to a politically motivated effort to tighten up management of the High Command.³

These early moves set the tone for Gorbachev's personnel changes over the next two years, including the eventual sacking of the Minister of Defense, Marshal Sokolov, over the Mathias Rust incident of May 1987. The man who replaced Sokolov, General Dimitri Yazov, appears to have been promoted from relative obscurity for the sole purpose of serving as Gorbachev's man in charge. One line of speculation has suggested that the incident served as the culmination of a longstanding if tacit dispute over the parameters of civilian control over military decisionmaking. For proponents of this line of argument, Gorbachev's show of strength was a final demonstration of Party authority. Others have noted that despite the disciplinary nature of his decision,

³For a discussion of this issue and the events that preceded it see Azrael, 1987, notably pp. 38-44; Gustafson and Mann, 1987, pp. 1-20; and Hutchinson, 1987.

Gorbachev sought to avoid humiliating the marshals by confining his response to firing Sokolov and the Commander of the PVO, Marshal Koldunov. Sokolov's dismissal, in this view, while based on a convenient pretext, was not the result of Party-military infighting, but of a general policy of making way for the new order by clearing out the remnants of the old. Whether one favors the first or second interpretation, the conclusion is the same: Gorbachev was apparently both ready and able to challenge the military should it fail to measure up to his expectations.⁴ If he were able to do that, he might well be able to put an end to the submarine crisis.

One complicating variable is the degree of Politburo support Gorbachev is likely to enjoy in making decisions that will directly affect military policy or interests, which could well vary from issue to issue. The humiliation generated by the Rust affair, for example, certainly made it much easier for Gorbachev to secure the agreement of his colleagues to carry out a purge of certain difficult elements in the Soviet military leadership. The balance of opinion within the Politburo (and among influential members of the General Staff) regarding the costs and benefits of the submarine campaign may be a very different matter. These operations might enjoy substantial support within the Politburo. If so, whatever Gorbachev's own attitude toward the campaign may be, he may not be willing to expend the personal political capital that would be required to curtail it until he can demonstrate that these activities are causing much greater political difficulties in the West than has yet been the case.

Whether one accepts this explanation or not turns in large measure on one's views of Gorbachev's decisionmaking authority and his estimate of the risks the submarine campaign poses to his larger political program in Europe. The political risks posed by Soviet operations are not insignificant. They are obviously not thought to be serious enough to force an end to the campaign, neither can they be reasonably dismissed. Gorbachev appears to have won sufficient political support early in his tenure to make several far-reaching changes in Soviet foreign policy, some of which—notably the withdrawal from Afghanistan—were probably much more controversial and dramatic than would be a withdrawal from the Swedish coast. Although opposition to many of his reforms and proposals may have grown, in view of his other accomplishments, he probably also has had the power to revise Soviet Swedish policy.

⁴Mackintosh, 1988, pp. 49-56; Herspring, 1987, pp. 99-107.

CONSENSUS IN SOVIET DECISIONMAKING

Swedish policymakers were not alone in seeing hope in the Gorbachev transition. They were, however, among the first to be disappointed. By the end of Gorbachev's first year in office, the hope engendered by his rise to power began to fade. There had been no evident change in the pattern or the scope of Soviet clandestine operations both on and off Sweden's coast. Four years into Gorbachev's reign, the pattern continues. As in the past, the most obvious of these operations have involved Soviet submarines, which continue to ply Swedish inner waters on a regular basis. Although the Swedes have not yet published precise figures, preliminary findings for 1987 suggest that the number of aggregate incidents (confirmed and possible violations) may have actually increased over the number registered in 1985 and 1986. They continued to occur, according to the Swedish Defense Staff, at a disturbing frequency through 1988 and into the first quarter of 1989. Whether Soviet incursions have grown or decreased slightly over the past three or four years, however, is less important than that they have continued. The character of Soviet submarine operations in Sweden appears to have been unaffected by changes in the Soviet leadership and Soviet policy toward western Europe.

On the basis of such operational continuity, even the most committed have questioned the assumption that these incidents resulted from either the diminution of civilian authority over the Soviet military establishment or a disparity in civil-military interests. Gorbachev's political agenda in Europe, the changes he has instituted within the military command structure, and his early moves to take personal control of the Soviet foreign policy establishment have helped put Soviet decisionmaking into focus. The Soviet political platform in Europe is directly at odds with the goals and potential consequences of the Swedish submarine campaign. On the face of it, Gorbachev appears to have every reason to see that these operations are brought to a rapid halt. He has been in a position to end the submarine campaign at once if there were a net advantage in doing so. The fact that he has not by early 1989, the date of our last available information, suggests that he is in general agreement with the objectives of these operations and is prepared to tolerate the costs and risks of continuing.

Gorbachev's success in bringing the Soviet political hierarchy, the foreign policy establishment, and the military into line with his larger policy agenda has robbed him of any excuse he might have had for not ending or scaling back Soviet submarine operations off the Swedish coast. The implications of this conclusion extend back beyond the current regime to at least 1980 when the pattern of Soviet submarine

activities in Sweden first began to change. If Gorbachev is a party to these operations, then those who preceded him, from Brezhnev to Chernenko, must be implicated as well. These operations were not the result of any reluctance or inability on the part of the civilian leadership to either control or discipline the military as many once suspected (or hoped), but of common civil-military agreement on the need to prepare for the possibility of a future war in Europe. In the case of Sweden and the high north, at least, this does not appear to have changed since March 1985.

Apart from what this means for the likely nature of Soviet wartime operations against Sweden and the Nordic peninsula, the apparent consensus regarding this campaign provides an interesting perspective on the limits of civilian-military competition since 1980. A growing number of observers have come to argue that the Soviet party-military relationship, after a decade of quiescence in the early Brezhnev era, has once again fallen on hard times. The roots of these troubles have been traced back to the mid- to late 1970s, in differences over budget allocations, personnel disputes, and civilian pronouncements on military policy, all of which were thought to have posed a threat to the interests and status of the military establishment. Those who have pursued this line of argument clearly have a point. There are and have been disagreements between the Party and the military leaderships over a range of defense-related issues over the course of the past ten years. The real question, however, is not whether differences exist, but rather how deep these divisions run? Are they the result of simple differences of opinion over how to divide a limited economic pie? Are they the result of a recent decline in the perceived status of the military within Soviet decisionmaking circles? Or do they represent a much deeper and ultimately more serious dispute over the fundamental assumptions and goals underlying Soviet military planning and defense policy?

These questions cannot be answered on the basis of the Soviet submarine campaign alone. Although there is reason to believe that the Soviet civil-military leadership is in agreement over the basic objectives of the submarine campaign, it is dangerous to extrapolate from this single case, regardless of the length of time these operations have been carried out. This case does remind us that the question of Soviet civil-military relations covers a lot of complicated territory. Civilian and military views may be harmonious in some areas and much less so in others. Despite any differences that might exist between civilian and military leaders (or, indeed, within the civil and military leadership groups themselves), both parties undoubtedly share a strong consensus over the need to prepare for war in time of peace. What was once thought to be the result of a breakdown or at least a broken connection

in civil-military cooperation, can now be considered to be an example of common ground between the civilian and military leaderships on certain basic strategic objectives. The submarine campaign is not a politically neutral enterprise. There is also more at stake for the Soviets than the embarrassment that attends getting caught where they do not belong. Despite these risks, Soviet operations in Swedish waters (and related activities ashore) appear to have retained Moscow's support over the course of the past several years.

This observation should be a source of concern not only to Swedish planners but to those who worry about NATO defense in the north. These activities are not the result of an independent, much less unauthorized decision on the part of the Soviet military to support its plans for a future war in Europe without regard for the political fallout. The directed nature of Soviet behavior, the time frame over which these operations have been carried out, and the costs and risks that have been incurred to conduct these activities in the face of a contrary political policy toward Europe and the West all suggest basic civilian-military agreement on the strategic importance of the Scandinavian peninsula and the role it could play in a future conflict. This agreement is likely to go beyond the fundamentals, to encompass the premises and operational concepts that provide the groundwork for Soviet European military planning. Although there may well be differences in the importance each group assigns to the political and military consequences of these operations, there is little dispute over the basic agenda. The Soviet civil leadership is willing to pay a political price to see these activities carried out, price being defined in terms of current costs and risks, which are measured against the prospect of some future military advantage.

SWEDISH POLICY AND SOVIET BEHAVIOR

Soviet operational activity in Swedish waters has remained fairly consistent over the past eight years, but the same cannot be said for Swedish policy, which appears to have undergone several unannounced changes since 1983. These changes have been the result both of Stockholm's changing views of the source of the crisis and its narrowing options for dealing with it. In retrospect, it appears that the government's early response to the problem was to attempt to influence Soviet behavior through a combination of publicity, back channel communication, and military bluff. The high point of this policy was reached in the immediate aftermath of the 1983 Defense Commission report, with the publication of the Commission's findings, the second

official protest, the uncharacteristically threatening noises made by Palme at the time of the report's release, the allocation of emergency funds to improve Sweden's ASW defenses, and the well publicized changes made in the Navy's rules of engagement. Although there were certainly those within the Swedish government who were quite serious about improving the country's ability to defend itself against Soviet submarines, the overriding motivation behind these actions seems to have been the hope that they would deter any further violations.

The Soviets called the Swedish bluff, undercutting the Palme government's hope of persuading Moscow to stop sending submarines into Swedish territorial waters without a direct confrontation. There were at least four confirmed Soviet operations carried out off the Swedish coast, all of which were thought to involve multiple submarines, followed by Karlskrona II, still one of the largest and most provocative operations conducted to date. The message was clear. The violation of Swedish waters would continue. Since that time, Swedish authorities have begun to confront the limitations imposed by their own chosen interpretation of "armed neutrality" and their abiding reluctance to challenge Soviet actions. The time had come to carry out their threat and halt Soviet violations unilaterally. This could only be accomplished by either turning the repeated violation of Swedish waters into an international incident, or sinking or capturing a Soviet submarine. On the basis of Swedish behavior over the past four years, however, Stockholm has proven to be unwilling to put its public policy into practice. The political risks have been judged to be too high. Rather than force the submarine crisis to turn on Soviet concerns over Swedish escalation, the Swedes have allowed their policy options to be shaped by their own uncertainty over the political consequences and the possible Soviet response.⁵

Sweden, rather than the Soviet Union, has been forced to adjust its policies on the submarine question. The adjustment has not been made publicly, where Stockholm appears as determined as ever to put a stop to Soviet violations, but privately, where a decision seems to have been made sometime in 1985 to downplay further Soviet incidents. This represents a direct reversal of Sweden's earlier policy of trying to

⁵There appears to be an element within Swedish decisionmaking circles that believes that the Soviets could well retaliate militarily if Sweden were to destroy a submarine. While objectively unlikely, such a perception could be expected to constrain Swedish options for dealing with Soviet intrusions. That the Swedes have not yet even identified the Soviet Union as the perpetrator of these intrusions in an effort to raise the political price Moscow must pay to continue in the wake of nine years of intrusions calls the very basis of Sweden's public policy into question. If Stockholm is not willing to go this far, it certainly is not serious about taking the much more serious step (which it threatens publicly) of either sinking an "alien" submarine or risk sinking it by forcing it up.

both embarrass and, within limits, intimidate Moscow into halting or scaling back its operations. In the face of continuing Soviet intrusions, and reluctant to carry their established hard line policy to its logical conclusion, Swedish authorities were left with few alternatives but to quietly retreat from their open threat to use "whatever means" were necessary to put an end to the intrusions of "foreign" submarines. Far from embarrassing the Soviets, Stockholm's unwillingness to make good on its threats had become an embarrassment to itself, as Swedish and foreign observers alike began to question its sincerity and its ability to deal with the crisis. Depending on the political persuasion and charitableness of their critics, Swedish authorities were either deceiving the public about their intention to use force against Soviet violators or were simply technically incapable of localizing and targetting underwater intruders. In either case they did not look good.

The recent shift in Swedish policy has been manifest in two areas. First and most obviously, Stockholm appears to have reversed its earlier decision to keep the public apprised of Soviet operations.⁶ Although Soviet submarines continue to enter Swedish waters at regular intervals, the incidence, nature, and location of these operations have not been systematically and fully released through official channels since at least early 1986. Individual operations often leak to the press, but the government has often sought to downplay these incidents and has refused to discuss how these incursions fit into the general pattern of Soviet violations. Faced with the choice of either finally moving against Soviet submarines or minimizing the extent and possible implications of Soviet activities, Stockholm has opted for the latter course.⁷ This decision has been adhered to in the face of open criticism from sources both inside and outside the government, by the press, elements of the military, and members of the political opposition. Several recent critics have charged that Stockholm has sought to conceal the full

⁶This is evident from a review of the government's annual and quarterly submarine reports (*Orientering*), which became quite vague by late 1985 and early 1986. Although Stockholm would admit that the violation of Sweden's territorial waters was continuing, little information was released to the general public.

⁷This has not stopped Swedish officials from occasionally reverting to hard-line public positions on the submarine crisis, usually when pressed by newsmen. Most recently, Prime Minister Carlsson in an interview with two Swedish reporters stated that "blood may flow" if foreign submarines continue to violate Swedish waters. The line was widely reported in the Western press leading to widespread speculation that Sweden had revised its policy on intruding Soviet submarines. The full text of the interview (which was not reproduced), however, reveals that Carlsson made this statement only after being badgered into it by his two interviewers. The fact that he used "may" rather than "will" is a better indicator of Stockholm's position on the submarine question than his reference to the possibility that a submarine will be sunk. Stockholm Domestic Service, December 20, FBIS-WER, December 21, 1987.

extent of Soviet operations off Sweden's coast for several years. Many have argued that Swedish authorities have adopted a policy of down-playing the ongoing nature of Soviet activity by restricting the flow of information to the public.⁸

The timidity of Sweden's response to the submarine crisis is illustrated by the fact that on only two occasions has Stockholm even admitted publicly that these intrusions are indeed Soviet.⁹ Swedish officials will willingly admit privately that the Soviets are to blame, but the public position of the Swedish government is that these incidents are perpetrated by "alien submarines" of "unknown origin."¹⁰ This position has resulted from a deep-seated fear that if Sweden identifies the culprit it will have identified the enemy, which many perceive would place Sweden by association in the NATO camp and compromise its neutral standing. For similar reasons, Stockholm has taken every opportunity to demonstrate that it is using an even-handed approach to the problem of territorial violations. One recent submarine report issued by the Chief of Sweden's Defense Staff, for example, having noted that Sweden has no proof of the origins of its underwater intruders, concludes that these incidents must have been carried out by East Bloc and NATO submarines, since these are the only states (other than Sweden) that operate submarines in the Baltic. Similarly, NATO aircraft that stray into Swedish airspace, usually off the southern tip of the country on the edge of the 16-mile air corridor between Swedish and East German territory, have triggered the same publicity and official response as the violation of Swedish naval bases by "alien" intruders.¹¹ On several occasions these incidents have resulted in official and unofficial protests by the Swedish government. The fact that these two categories of incidents are not comparable is less important than the opportunity the former provide to posture as an even-handed neutral.

⁸See, for example, *Svenska Dagbladet*, November 10, 1985; June 28, 1987; July 1, 1987; July 2, 1987; July 24, 1987. *Dagens Nyheter*, November 30, 1985; June 29, 1987; November 27, 1987. See also Salicath, 1987, pp. 49-56.

⁹These incidents were the 1981 grounding of U-137, which Swedish officials could hardly ignore, and the first Harafjorden incident of 1982. The Soviets were implicated in the latter case by the Submarine Defense Commission against the objections of Prime Minister Palme who wished to avoid naming the Soviet Union in the Commission's final report. Had Palme had his way, Sweden would have by now implicated the Soviets only once, because this decision was forced by the obvious nature of the event. See *Dagens Nyheter*, March 6-9, 1988.

¹⁰In a recent criticism of the government's position on the question of national origins the chairman of Sweden's Moderate Party, Carl Bildt, noted that "the only thing that has been said officially is that nothing can be said." The implication of this position, he went on to point out, is "that nothing may be said." *Svenska Dagbladet*, December 19, 1987.

¹¹These aircraft fly between the Lubeck area and the Danish island of Bornholm where there is a live-fire bombing range. Cole, 1986b, p. 27.

In contrast to the diffidence of Swedish actions, Stockholm appears to have a renewed if quiet determination to do what is necessary to improve the country's ability to defend itself against a possible Soviet attack in time of war. This has evolved hand in hand with efforts to reduce the public exposure given to Soviet incursions. Efforts in this area have been directed not only against the submarine threat, but against the range of unconventional threats facing Swedish planners. These efforts, of course, can be traced back to 1982 and the original Harsfjarden incident. Official concern over the possible wartime implications of Soviet peacetime operations has matured and grown over the past three years, with noticeable effect: an evident hardening of official attitudes on defense; the refinement of Swedish threat perceptions; the institution of several key changes in force structure, particularly with regard to the threat posed by Soviet unconventional forces; a noticeable increase in Swedish ASW capabilities, and a small increase in defense expenditures. As Stockholm has grown quiet on the public front, it has taken steps to enhance its ability to confront the Soviets should it ever be forced to do so.¹² Whether the government continues to push these initiatives in the face of growing budgetary pressure remains to be seen.

Such measures will probably not bring Soviet operations to an end. They do nothing, in and of themselves, to raise the costs or risks of continuing to send submarines into Swedish waters. Soviet operations must be examined from a costs-benefits perspective. The Soviet leadership has accepted short-term political costs and risks to support long-term military objectives. It is difficult to determine what value they assign to each side of this equation, but the expected gains are still believed to outweigh the expected costs. Considered from that perspective, one must conclude that Swedish policy has been quite the opposite of what it should have been in light of its stated objectives. Rather than downplay these incidents, as they have done over the course of the past three to four years, Swedish decisionmakers should have moved aggressively to bring Soviet actions to the forefront of international attention. They could have done so by a high profile

¹² Apart from large annual investments in the area of ASW, Swedish force planners have begun to address Sweden's vulnerabilities to unconventional attack. These efforts are directed at protecting (1) the warning and alert system, (2) the mobilization infrastructure, (3) central services and utilities, (4) critical national leadership, and (5) high value military targets ranging from command and control assets to support services. The Swedes are still far from achieving a consensus on the level of effort that is required. Many of these programs, particularly where they have required new funding to implement, have met with serious political opposition. What will finally come of these efforts is still undetermined. See *Dagens Nyheter*, June 2, 1987; June 5, 1987. *Svenska Dagbladet*, May 31, 1987; June 27, 1987. See also the discussion in O'Dwyer, 1988.

campaign to identify the Soviet Union as the responsible power, expose and publicize the character of Soviet activities, and discredit Soviet claims to innocence. At some point, the ratio of costs to gains would be sufficiently high that Moscow would no longer find it profitable to continue.

As it is, Swedish policy continues to manifest an air of unreality. Stockholm still hides behind the fiction of "alien intruders," insisting that it has no way of determining who is responsible for the hundreds of known and suspected intrusions conducted off Sweden's coast since 1980. The Soviets, meanwhile, continue to send submarines into Swedish waters with little apparent concern that they will be called to an accounting. Although Swedish policy may not be quite as accommodating today as it seems to have been under the late Palme government, Stockholm's position remains the same: Avoid embarrassing Moscow by raising the profile of Soviet intrusions and hope that the political leadership will eventually see the error of its ways. Swedish officials still insist that they have finally gotten serious about sinking the next Soviet submarine found in Sweden's inner waterways. While this might well be true, it is nevertheless difficult to believe. Stockholm has been talking tough since 1983 and now faces a serious credibility gap. Nowhere is this more likely to be true than in Moscow, which has been listening to veiled Swedish threats for years without consequence. Threats, in short, are no longer sufficient. Stockholm appears to have maneuvered itself into a position in which it must carry through on its threat to sink a submarine before anyone believes it was indeed serious about doing so. In the absence of such an action, the future of the submarine crisis will be determined by events beyond Sweden's control.

V. PROSPECTS

Three things could bring Sweden's submarine crisis to a conclusion: a shift in Swedish submarine policy, which would be signaled by a public campaign to expose the nature of Soviet operations in Swedish waters; a change in the political and strategic priorities of the Soviet civil or military leaderships; and a change in Gorbachev's assessment of the current costs and risks of continuing to send submarines into Swedish waters. Swedish decisionmakers may be forced by events to reshape their current policy on the submarine issue. There is some evidence that such a change may now be under consideration. Similarly, Soviet views of the benefits and liabilities of the submarine campaign could change, a move that could result in either the cessation of Soviet operations altogether or a noticeable shift in their scope or operational character. Such a reassessment could be prompted by a variety of factors, including a change in the strategic importance currently afforded the Nordic peninsula or a shift in Soviet political priorities in Europe. The first would reduce the expected advantages of continuing to violate Swedish sovereignty while the second could increase the costs. The net benefit of carrying on, in either case, might be judged to be sufficiently small to warrant a change in Soviet behavior.

At one level, one must assume that the prospects for any meaningful change in the scale or nature of Soviet operations are rather poor. The Soviet submarine campaign is notable, among other things, for its continuity and duration. During a period of substantial change in the Soviet system, Soviet clandestine operations on and off the Swedish coast have continued unabated. If these operations could be reasonably assumed to be a series of isolated and unassociated incidents, they might be more easily dismissed. This has not been the case. The scope and apparent operational focus of Soviet intrusions suggest that they have been carried out in support of a larger campaign to monitor the Swedish defense establishment. The only reasonable conclusion one can draw from these activities is that Sweden has been brought into Soviet wartime planning. While we can only speculate on the role Sweden might play in Soviet war plans, the objectives at stake are sufficiently important to incur some combination of political costs and risks today to help ensure that they are satisfied in the unlikely event of a future general war in Europe. These operations have now spanned the terms of four Soviet leadership groups. Such consensus gives

added credence to the view that the submarine campaign has been designed to serve some larger (and presumably important) set of objectives and is not likely to be brought to an end for any but an equally good set of reasons.

The changes being instituted or at least attempted by the present Soviet leadership are far from over. Things may yet change to Sweden's benefit. Short of this, Gorbachev may at least be more sensitive to the costs and risks associated with these operations than were his predecessors. He is clearly a man with a political-diplomatic agenda. Reshaping the Soviet Union's image in the West and improving the Soviet relationship with Western Europe and the United States have assumed a much higher importance over the past four years than at any previous period since World War II. Gorbachev's opening to the West has already borne fruit and promises to result in additional gains over the next few years, in an expanded arms control regime, in possible trade and other economic concessions, in a reduced U.S. profile in Europe, and in the breathing space provided by a more relaxed political atmosphere. The present Soviet leadership, one can assume, will not place the advantages of this developing relationship at risk lightly. To the degree that the submarine campaign begins to jeopardize these goals, the wisdom of continuing is likely to be reconsidered. The fact that this has not yet occurred only indicates that the perceived risks to these objectives are still considered to be acceptable.

Short of a complete shift in Soviet policy, the burden for ending the submarine campaign still lies with Sweden. Gorbachev may well be more sensitive to Swedish efforts to raise the price he must pay to continue to send submarines into Swedish waters, but nothing is likely to happen until Stockholm has convinced Soviet decisionmakers that it is both willing and able to up the political ante. The Soviet submarine campaign and related Soviet operations ashore have been a direct affront to Swedish sovereignty and a threat to the country's security. If Soviet motives are indeed similar to those presented in this study, these activities play an important role in Soviet peacetime planning for wartime operations against Sweden, the Nordic peninsula, and the western Baltic. Of equal concern must be the influence these operations have had on the principle of "armed neutrality." From Sweden's perspective, that has always meant the ability and willingness to defend the country's independence and territorial integrity against any and all challengers. Nine years into the submarine campaign, the principle has been compromised. Whether Sweden's inability to bring Soviet intrusions to an end has been due to a failure of will, as suggested in this study, or a failure of capability, as argued by Stockholm, has almost become academic. In either case, Sweden's ability to defend

its frontiers has been called into question. This is likely to further encourage those who have been responsible for the submarine campaign and should serve as a source of concern for NATO planners.

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